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A Journalism Review

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Kissinger's 'Peace at Hand'

BY LESLIE GELB AND ANTHONY LAKE

For high drama, it was the best TV show since John F. Kennedy's launching of the Cuban Missile Crisis on October 22, 1962. There was Henry Kissinger on October 26, putting the frosting on four brilliant years of diplomacy by declaring "peace is at hand" in Vietnam. His virtuoso performance ushered in a period of unparalleled, infectious optimism. It lasted for seven weeks—until the low drama of Kissinger's next major press conference on December 16, and the B-52 blitz that then began. Like us, like almost everyone, the press was sucked into this vortex. In the process of doing a solid job of reporting on official U.S. attitudes, it tantalized the nation with the expectation of imminent peace. How did it all happen, and why?

The seven-week fling with optimism began with some heady stuff. Kissinger said that the major issues of the settlement had been resolved: separation of military and political issues, U.S. withdrawal in exchange for U.S. POWs, a cease-fire, a National Council to supervise free elections. He predicted that final agreement would take one short additional negotiating session of three or four days, and that only minor details needed clarification and fixing. Among these minor details were matters such as whether the cease-fire would be Indochina-wide or restricted to Vietnam, procedures to avoid last minute offensives, linguistic problems concerning the exact nature of the National Council, and whether the Saigon Government should be permitted to sign the final accord. In the face of the unprecedented assurance that we could count on peace, few made much of the fact that the minor details were not so minor at all.

The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, *Time* and *Newsweek* went for the peace is at hand theme with banner headlines.* Although Bernard Gwertzman's story in the *Times* did flag the details and warned that they "could lead to some delay in reaching a final agreement," the thrust of the story was not whether peace but when. The lead story in the *Post* did not even mention the details at all. *Time* ran a special issue that took a retrospective look at the war, featuring a dove on the cover. The *Newsweek* story was entitled "Peace is at Hand." It was difficult to be anything but euphoric. *Time* summed it up: "At long last the U.S. could really count on the end of the conflict."

*Obviously, other news organizations gave the story similar play. But no examination could cover the entire field. For this case study, we chose the four we did because of the extensive coverage they gave the story and because they are a principal source of information for other journals and commentators.

The next weeks would bring a delay in the resumption of negotiations, two negotiating sessions rather than one, screams of outrage from Thieu and threats that he would not sign, increased fighting in Vietnam, and rumors from the Communist side that the negotiations were in trouble. But throughout the period, most of the American press reported these difficulties as mere incidents on the certain road to peace. Take the *Time* headlines on the negotiating front from October 26 until the bombing resumed: "The Shape of Peace," "The U.S. After Vietnam," "Another Pause in the Pursuit of Peace," "The Dance Around the Fire," "The Peace Momentum Resumes," "Another Pause on the Road to Peace," "Paris Round 3: Ready to Wrap Up the Peace," "Pursuing the Still Elusive Terms of Peace" and "A Shattering Disappointment."

This is not the place to judge whether the Kissinger press conference was real or fraudulent. We believe that Nixon and Kissinger probably honestly felt they could get the agreement; they also probably believed that optimism was a necessary part of the strategy for achieving it. They were doing more than buying time with the American people. The briefings would keep the door open with Hanoi. And it would warn Thieu that the path had been set. As Kissinger admitted on December 16, "Then towards the end of October we encountered a number of difficulties. Now at the time, because we wanted to maintain the atmosphere leading to a rapid settlement, we mentioned them at our briefings but we did not elaborate on them." In short, cutting the corners of total candor was justified in the name of peace.

The problem was that the press rarely wrote about it that way. Most journalists did not see the Kissinger briefing as part of the White House negotiating strategy, but simply as a public commitment to the certainty of peace. They thus allowed themselves to become a part of the negotiating strategy rather than accurate recorders and analysts of events. In a way they were trapped and they trapped themselves: first because of how the White House launched the story; second, because of structural givens in governmental-press relations.

The Kissinger press conference was so dramatic and his statement so sweeping that it was difficult not to be swept along. As one *Time* correspondent told us: "There was Kissinger standing up there in a televised briefing, with the full authority of Nixon behind him, saying 'peace is at hand.'"

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[HELLBOX]

Rosebuds to Israel Shenker for deftly exposing in *The New York Times* (Jan. 22) how the legal profession is fattening off the Penn Central while the bankrupt railroad loses "\$400,000 to \$1-million a day and . . . is barred by court order from paying its tens of thousands of bondholders, forbidden to settle more than 26,000 creditor claims (totaling \$3.348-billion) against it, excused from paying taxes on its property, and permitted to put off repayment of hundreds of millions of dollars in bank debt." Noting one Securities and Exchange Commission lawyer's observation that it is not uncommon to spend \$10,000 worth of legal time to explore \$2,000 worth of case, Shenker reports that the prestigious East Coast law firms are charging up to \$112 an hour for a partner's time. New York's Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, Philadelphia's Blank, Rome, Klaus & Comisky, and Washington's Covington & Burling—all acting as "special counsel" in the Great Train Bankruptcy—collectively billed about \$1.6-million last year. "There have been court hearings with more than 100 lawyers present," writes Shenker, who set out after the story because of its telling irony. "Not once in the course of the Penn Central affair," writes Shenker in his article, "has Judge Fullam [Federal Judge John P. Fullam, who is overseeing the bankrupt Penns] exercised his right to cut lawyers' compensation . . ."

In all, the piece is a model of reporting, full of insight, solid investigation, felicitous writing and a wit rare for a business story in the *Times* or anywhere else. ("The mere process of getting a single brief into print can elevate a lawyer's bill to enviable heights . . . this literature undergoes more revision than just about any other kind of creative writing.") It is encouraging, too, to find the *Times* devoting some talent and energy to recording the hustle that goes on in the higher reaches of the private sector, a vast and often venal preserve that—Shenker's sally to the contrary notwithstanding—is still sacrosanct in most of the media.

McCarthy and Halberstam

Two months after publication, "the season's runaway best seller," as the ad copy correctly describes David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* had already sold a staggering 130,000 copies. The rave reviews provided Random House's ad men with a seemingly endless number of blurbs. Even where reviewers of this chronicle of our engagement in Vietnam expressed reservations—as did Victor Navasky in *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review and Ronald Steel in *The Washington Post's* Book World—they nevertheless praised the book's immense readability, its power and its narrative technique. Of all the reviews, Navasky's page-one essay was the most important since there is no question in the literary world that TBR has more impact than any other publication on an author's reputation and on the sale of his book. Consequently, one cannot help but wonder what might have happened had the following scenario turned out just a little differently.

Some months ago, John Leonard, the editor of TBR, decided he wanted Mary McCarthy, the novelist, critic and author of three books on Vietnam, to review *The Best and the Brightest*. Leonard says he may have been influenced by the fact that Halberstam's portraits of the architects of the Vietnam policy brought to mind McCarthy's novel, *The Company She Keeps*. He made his request via a cable delivered to expatriate McCarthy at her Paris apartment. Through a curious accident of timing, a similar request from Robert Silvers, editor of *The New York Review of Books*, arrived only a day or two later, according to McCarthy. Silvers had been unable to persuade his first choice, Murray Kempton, to take on the assignment. After some deliberation, McCarthy opted for *The New York Review* and came up with a 10,000-word diatribe (published Jan. 25) that is almost shocking in its intensity.

McCarthy doesn't waste words on a discursive introduction. "What is the purpose of this book?" she begins. "Six hundred and eighty-eight pages of 'colorful' narrative that seems to have been breathlessly dictated to a recording device and, except for the portions that appeared in magazines, never to have been touched by an editorial pencil wielded by the author or anybody else. One keeps asking oneself to what end all these excited words were assembled, what they add to the already replete literature on the US and Vietnam." Not only does she attack the "pieties of the avowed purpose," the "flashy 'styling'" and the "shoddy workmanship;" worst of all, she contradicts all of Halberstam's other critics by characterizing the book as boring: "In fact the book's success is a mystery to this reader, who was unable to stay awake for more than a few paragraphs at a go without ferocious application of will power, tea, coffee, drinks of water, propping open of eyelids, pinches, strolls about the room."

McCarthy says she chose *The New York Review* as her vehicle out of a sense of loyalty and "esprit de corps" toward a magazine with which she has enjoyed a good relationship. She has not written for TBR since 1965. But there were also other considerations. As she points out, TBR did not review her first two Vietnam books, both of which were published during the editorship of Leonard's predecessor, Francis Brown. Under Leonard, her two most recent

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A Case Against Press Councils

BY RICHARD POLLAK

In the hope of injecting some perception and wit into the debate now roiling over The Twentieth Century Fund's determination to erect a national press council, I assigned the subject to a writer well-known for the qualities sought. I should have known better. For once he read the fund's 64-page proposal he was on the phone imploring to be excused from duty. And the more background information I sent him the more desperate he became. "I simply can't do it," he pleaded, in what must have been our sixth phone conversation. "I just can't take any of it seriously. It's all so silly . . . Besides, shooting down dirigibles is not how you get credit for being an ace." I argued that, yes, of course, the whole press council notion was a foolish pursuit and had been ever since the Hutchins Commission first promulgated it 25 years ago. But a dirigible? Not any longer. Scores of *leading, respected, knowledgeable, fair-minded* citizens are taking the idea very seriously these days.

We are going to have a national press council. The Twentieth Century Fund hopes to announce the 15 members by the end of this month. These members will be selected by a founding committee named by the "task force" that drew up the fund proposal,* and will be selected from both inside and outside journalism. In the words of the fund report, the job of the Council on Press Responsibility and Press Freedom, as the new body will be weightily called, is

to receive, to examine, and to report on complaints concerning the accuracy and fairness of news reporting in the United States, as well as to initiate studies and report on issues involving the freedom of the press. The council shall limit its investigations to the principal national suppliers of news—the major wire services, the largest "supplemental" news services, the national weekly news magazines, national newspaper syndicates, national daily newspapers, and the nationwide broadcasting networks.

The founding committee is also charged with incorporating the council and establishing its budget, which has been fixed at approximately \$400,000 a year, a sum that more than one cynic has suggested augers well for the future employment of the burgeoning Journalism Criticism Establishment. According to Twentieth Century Fund director M. J. Rossant, as quoted in *The New York Times*, "eight foundations have offered to finance the council's work, and about two-thirds of the money needed for three to five years of operation has been pledged."

Despite this largesse, all is by no means well. Predictably, much of the media's reaction to the advent of the council has ranged from sputtering hostility to, in W. S. Gilbert's phrase, "modified rapture." The American Society of Newspaper Editors recently polled 740 members by questionnaire and found that, of the 405 who replied, three out of four opposed even an A.S.N.E. grievance committee and four out of five opposed cooperating with any outside group like the council. In his weekly column, John Knight, overseer of the Knight Newspapers, warned that "any self-respecting editor who . . . subscribes to meddling by the National Press Council is simply eroding his own freedoms." With its usual gusto, the New York *Daily News* editorialized: "We don't care how much the Fund prates its virtuous intentions. This is a sneak attempt at press regulation, a bid for a role as unofficial news censor . . ."

But the potentially most damaging blow to the new organization came from the *Times*. In a memorandum to the staff last month, publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger announced that the newspaper had decided not to cooperate in any way with the council. "This means," wrote Sulzberger, "that we will not be a party to Council investigations [and that we] will not furnish information or explanations to the Council." In explaining the *Times*' stand, he wrote:

The real threat to a free press comes from people who are attempting to intimidate or to use the press for their own ends . . . The presence of the Council is not materially going to help us meet these real threats. Indeed, we are convinced that the operation of the Council will only serve to divert attention from them. The real threats will be met

only by a determined and direct defense of our own freedoms. Such a defense does not begin with an unjustified confession that our own shortcomings are such that we need monitoring by a press council. What would be at issue in proceedings before the Council would be the very thing that is most precious to us—our credibility. We do not want such crucial judgments made under a procedure so lacking in due process that one organization would function as investigator, prosecutor and judge rolled into one.

Not only could the council accomplish little good, wrote Sulzberger, but it could cause considerable harm. For one thing, its establishment would encourage local, state and regional councils (something the fund task force urges), thus "geometrically [compounding] the risk that such machinery would be used by special interest groups with causes to espouse." For another:

The Council plan makes provision for a grievance committee, meeting eight to twelve times a year, to screen public complaints. It contemplates a staff director and a staff, ad hoc groups of "experts" and "fact-finding task forces." Were we to cooperate, we would become involved in time-consuming investigations and explanations. In some instances, the question of divulging confidential sources would surely arise. The Task Force asserts that the Council would have to maintain the confidentiality of news sources disclosed in its proceedings. We feel it is wrong to suggest that reporters and editors who are willing to risk jail to protect their sources would—or should—be ready to disclose them to the Council. Such disclosure would have the same chilling effect on the free flow of information as any other kind.

The Ford Foundation shared this concern, which was one of the reasons it ultimately decided not to join in funding the council. "We spent many, many hours pondering the matter," says one top officer, "and in the end the biggest problem was the subpoena. Suppose a reporter or broadcaster cooperates with the council by furnishing the confidential information it needs for its investigation. And then the government comes fishing. Are all 15 members willing to go to jail rather than divulge the information?" Ford also was put off by the quasi-judicial nature of the council (even though the group will have no enforcement power other than the publicity given its findings).

I should be heartened by all this heavy opposition to the national press council, I suppose, but I'm not. For however valid some of it may be, none of it stems from any real concern for fundamental reform in American journalism. That can only come from *inside* the profession. Specifically, as I have said in this space before, from a radical redistribution of power that kills once and for all the bankrupt notion that the decision-making process at a news organization is the exclusive preserve of ownership. In all the high-sounding prose I have read about press councils lately, this issue of power has not been raised even tangentially by either the attackers or the defenders. The former, of course, because the idea of opening up the decision-making process to the men and women in the newsroom is more an anathema than the press council itself. The latter, because they are committed to that classic American problem-dodging technique, the elite committee that issues reports. Advocates of press councils point knowingly to the "success" of the national press council in Great Britain and of local ones in Minnesota or Bend, Ore. But that success is a matter of processed individual grievances, not reform. England's council, which has been operating in its present form since 1964, doubtless embarrasses Fleet Street now and again, but British journalism is *basically* no different today than it was eight years ago. Ditto Minnesota and Bend, Ore.

The newsrooms of the United States are full of journalists with good ideas about how to create a more responsible and responsive press. If they had the power they deserve, the face of journalism in this country might change markedly—far more than it ever will under periodic hot compresses ministered by a national press council. As an example of the kind of practice that might cease under a more equitable distribution of power, consider the following: John Oakes is editor of the *Times* editorial page. But his cousin, the aforementioned Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, is the boss. So even though Oakes is a member of the Twentieth Century Fund task force that proposed the national press council, he is not likely to write an editorial favoring it on the page he supposedly runs. Even when it's all in the family, money decides.

*Members of the task force are Barry Bingham, Sr., board chairman of the *Louisville Courier Journal*; Lucy Wilson Benson, president, League of Women Voters; Stimson Bullitt, president, King Broadcasting Company; Hodding Carter 3rd, editor *The (Greenville, Miss.) Delta Democrat Times*; Robert Chandler, editor, *The (Bend, Ore.) Bulletin*; Ithiel de Sola Pool, professor of political science, M.I.T.; Hartford Gunn, Jr., president of the Public Broadcasting System; Richard Harwood, assistant managing editor, *The Washington Post*; Louis Martin, editor, *Chicago Defender*; John B. Oakes, editorial page editor, *The New York Times*; C. Donald Peterson, justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court; Paul Reardon, associate justice of Massachusetts' Supreme Judicial Court; Richard Salant, president, CBS News; Jesse Unruh, California political leader.

Frank Shakespeare's 'Dear John'...

Editor's note: The exchange of letters below between Frank Shakespeare, director of the United States Information Agency, and John Hart, the CBS News correspondent, took place not long after Hart returned from a three-week reporting visit to North Vietnam last fall (see accompanying article). Hart believes that Shakespeare's initial complaint, though marked "PERSONAL" on both letter and envelope, was suggested by the White House, a notion buttressed by the fact that blind copies reportedly were sent to the President's two media menacers, special counsel Charles Colson and special assistant Patrick Buchanan. The day before Shakespeare's first letter arrived, Hart received another letter, this one from the Internal Revenue Service in New York City advising him that his 1971 income tax return was being looked into. That action was dropped by the IRS in Washington on Dec. 13 after the intercession of Hart's tax accountant. Hart has no proof that the tax investigation was anything more than a coincidence. He has no proof that it was not, either. . . . Shakespeare's "PERSONAL" letter arrived in a franked envelope, a privilege reserved for official government correspondence only. The maximum fine is \$300 or a year in prison, or both. But, then, maybe the letter was official.

Dear John:

Now that you have left Hanoi and thus completed your reports from North Viet-Nam, I write you with reluctance and sadness.

Reluctance because during these years in Government I have refrained from written critical comment to any broadcasters lest it engender the least misperception of my root belief in the freedom of electronic media to report as they see it. Sadness because your broadcasts from Hanoi seemed to lack serious effort at objectivity. This is especially disturbing when the subject is as essential a matter as the nature of a regime with whom we have struggled so long and at such cost in men, unity and treasure. I do not know how you were treated by the North Vietnamese Government but I am sure you would have left the country or refused to broadcast if permitted only generally favorable remarks. Yet how then to account for your constant portrayal of life under the NVN Government as gentle, sensitive, religious, artistic, forgiving and (by us) abused.

A few illustrations . . .

There is frequent laughter . . . Yesterday when I suggested that we'd like to get up early some morning to film the sunrise over one of these lakes, it was suggested that's a wonderful idea because after all the American flyers cannot bomb the sun . . . Within a few hours [of my arrival] I have seen a richness in hospitality and a richness in hope.

Five thirty Sunday morning in Hanoi. This is the second Mass of the day. The cathedral is filled . . . [American peace workers] will be taken to see destroyed buildings and towns, and especially a number of destroyed, or partially destroyed, churches.

There is a display of forgiveness by the villagers [toward captured pilots] . . . being released under the humanitarian policy of the government.

Film of art work. A painting described as "recalling a bay . . . lovely . . . before it was heavily bombed."

Film of hospitals and churches bombed and damaged by Americans. No film of factories, bridges, railheads, supply centers or any normal war objectives.

Premier Pham Van Dong described as "a man of energy and wit . . . and subtlety too." The Premier's own statement as follows: "Now our people are striving to have peace along with independence and freedom. This is very clear and everyone knows it. We have striven just to get our independence, our freedom and peace. This is very obvious."

Where, John, was the balance. Why not any discernible effort to present an overall frame of reference. Did the overt invasion of the South never

occur? Were Vietnamese peasants, reeling under that invasion, absurd to clog roads, fleeing from so pleasant a social environment? Have the people of North Viet-Nam had the extraordinary good fortune to gain benevolent government without the inconvenience of elections and despite iron one-party rule? Whose troops are those seeking to subjugate South Viet-Nam, Cambodia and Laos?

One does not have to believe that President Thieu's government in Saigon is an exemplar of democratic virtue to perceive that in Hanoi there is an aggressive, totalitarian, communist dictatorship. But where was that reflected in your reports?

Your coverage of statements by American pilot prisoners, presented by the North Vietnamese with (as you said) no questions asked, was almost equally disconcerting. Illustratively:

I have been well treated since my capture and I would like to thank the people for their kindness . . . their humanity has also been shown by their release of three prisoners recently . . . I hope my government may soon bring this war to an end.

To my family, my lovely wife Patricia . . . I would wish that they select the candidate they feel will stop this war.

Such reporting, while technically factual, is just not playing it straight. You and CBS have a moral responsibility for fairness in any newscast. That responsibility enormously increases when you are reporting direct from the capital of a foreign state with whom we have long been engaged in a tragic, bitter, contentious struggle.

My concern goes beyond the distorted impact on the American people to the impact abroad. I assume CBS News included your reports in its worldwide service.

In your interview in Hanoi with the American Catholic Priest, Father Burry, he commented wryly, in connection with whether religious freedom exists in North Viet-Nam, that Christians "are very careful not to criticize the government." He could have added John Hart also. And in both cases the key question is Why.

Sincerely,
Frank Shakespeare
October 16, 1972

Dear Frank:

Since a number of the illustrations which you mention in your letter were fragmentary and paraphrases, I am sending you transcripts of all of the reports from Hanoi and from New York on Hanoi that I did. I believe you wrote the letter seriously, and I take it seriously. So I hope you will read all of the transcripts thoroughly and then perhaps you'd like to write me another letter.

Sincerely,
John Hart
October 18, 1972

Dear John:

Thanks for sending me the transcripts of your reports from Hanoi and subsequent programs dealing with North Viet-Nam after your return. I did not see the latter and therefore particularly appreciate the scripts.

You say you believe my letter to you was meant seriously. Indeed that is the case. After screening your programs in sequence one evening, I was depressed and puzzled. Television is a multi-faceted medium and a viewer's overall impression is a result of pictures, words, tone, juxtaposition and a variety of other factors. It seems to me that viewers to your reports were left a skewed impression of life in North Viet-Nam and the actions of our own country.

I wrote you because of my personal admiration for you and belief that your intent was and is to reflect significant reality. In the case of these Hanoi reports we simply disagree.

You were thoughtful to send me the scripts.

Sincerely,
Frank Shakespeare
November 1, 1972

...And an Interview in Hanoi

BY JOHN HART

The North Vietnamese smoke a lot. "Do you blame us?" one of them smiled when I remarked on it. They smile a lot, too. Their brand, their only brand, is Dien Bien Phu, a loosely packed cigarette that keeps going out. And the man who smoked and smiled more than any other I met was Luu Quy Ky, who was introduced as general secretary of the Journalists Association.

What I had in mind when I asked to have a conversation with some North Vietnamese journalists was one of those informal sidewalk cafe gatherings where we could drink beer or stronger and I could get them into a cordial discussion about such topics as freedom of the press and the adversary role of journalists in the United States. What I got was what was called "an exchange of views, one journalist to another" with Ky. There were a number of these during my stay and always they turned out to be an explanation for an hour or more of the North Vietnamese version of their history or their government or the bombing.

Ky appeared to be the protocol officer to foreign journalists. I would see him around the Thong Nhat Hotel talking with visiting Chinese or French journalists, smoking and smoking, smiling and chuckling at the ironies the North Vietnamese enjoy so immensely in conversation and which he enjoyed especially. When Henry Kissinger came back without peace in his hand from Paris and said we would not, "if I may say so, be charmed" into a settlement the President didn't like, I thought of Luu Quy Ky smiling and blinking and coughing and delivering his ironies and his charm.

The first exchange of views with Ky was a lecture on Vietnamese history interwoven with geography, minority cultures and even some local paleontology. The second one, at my request, was on the press of North Vietnam. He began this one with statistics, which the North Vietnamese are addicted to. (Every visit to a province was begun with a lecture on the number of people, the number of schools, the number of each kind of bomb that had fallen on the province in the Nixon Administration in comparison to the Johnson Administration, the number of people killed, and number of people wounded, the number of American airplanes shot down, etc.) Ky told me there are 24 weekly newspapers throughout the country, 30 monthly magazines, 70 different scientific bulletins, and four daily newspapers in Hanoi alone, the main one being Nhan Dan. Once through the numbers, I asked Ky about books, because a Western journalist who is welcome in Hanoi once told me his book on Ho Chi Minh was not available to the North Vietnamese. They had suggested perhaps he delete a few things, for example his observation that General Vo Nguyen Giap was possibly more brilliant even than Ho. So I wanted to know who decides what books would be printed and distributed in North Vietnam, and what the criteria were?

ANSWER: Up to how our government has not made a single decision as to who is able to read what books and who not. There is no forbidden reading of the foreign press. The only matter is how to buy foreign press. We have no commercial relations between Hanoi and America. Generally speaking, there are no U.S. newspapers here. We get articles from third countries, from France and Japan, etc. So whoever has foreign currency can buy that. We don't have much foreign currency, so we have to read the foreign press collectively. We try our best to follow articles in U.S. newspapers.

QUESTION: I'm interested in your comments on the difference between the independent press in our country and the press that speaks for the government in your country.

A: You are right. The Vietnam press has close cooperation with the government because it is the people's government. Between the government and the people there are close bonds, so every policy and line of government goes through national assembly or mass organizing for discussion. People are organized in mass organizations, including reporters and the press society, and our representatives of the press society easily get a chance to give suggestions and ideas to the government. Including ideas on freedom of the press. And every line and policy concerning the press society is always adopted by the government. Ho was the number one journalist of ours. Pham Van Dong and General Giap were also press writers, men who often contributed to our newspapers. The policy of the government is always to be of good service to people. That's why people always consider the government their own. However, our press still enjoys the right to criticize various branches of government.

Q: Can you give me an example?

A: In every newspaper there appear articles of criticism. We criticize various ministries, light industry, for example, when the light industry

ministry produced mediocre consumer goods and with high prices. Or we criticize the agriculture ministry which cannot guide people very well to carry out production. Or we criticize the commercial ministry for poor management of the network of distribution. We criticize every waste of the state. We criticize everyone who does not observe strictly legislation passed by the state. We criticize every phenomenon of bureaucratism by state cadres. We criticize many directors of factories who do not carry out good management, or who have bad usage of manpower. We criticize the cooperative farms which do not work well. We criticize every individual in society who commits errors. For example, a careless driver who causes an accident [Ky laughs] or sellers of goods who cannot protect commodities properly. For instance, if cigarettes get wet and lose quality we criticize that [more laughter].

Q: United States papers advise government on alternate peace plans. Do your newspapers ever criticize publicly your negotiations or suggest alternatives?

A: We agree wholly with the policy of negotiations, and that's why we have no ideas. Another thing, we have no censorship. People and their mass organizations manage the newspapers themselves; they have a large mass of readers. Every day we get thousands of letters from readers criticizing newspapers. They are published every day as instructed by President Ho when he

What I had in mind when I asked to have a conversation with some North Vietnamese journalists was one of those informal sidewalk cafe gatherings where we could drink beer or stronger [and talk about] freedom of the press. . . What I got was what was called "an exchange of views. . ."

was alive. He demanded that every newspaper reply to every letter. Newspapers have a close connection with government and close bonds with the masses. Our journalists bridge between the government and the masses. Generally speaking, on the political line, our press has no difficulty. If some matter is not clear we invite the person in the government to discuss it, though not in a formal press conference. The whole matter may be discussed in a day, maybe two days—and discussed on a basis of comradeship.

Q: Are publishers part of the government?

A: The government owns no publishing houses. The publishing houses belong to the mass organizations. For example, the youth publishing house, founded by Ho Chi Minh, belongs to the Writers Society.

Q: Do publishers decide who will translate from a foreign language? Who will be translated from a foreign language?

A: That is another matter. The Bureau of External Publications has close connection with the cultural ministry and some connection with the import-export of newspapers and magazines. We try to find out what readers in other countries are interested in. We generally cannot meet the high demand of the masses, and paper is short. And illustrations are frequently omitted. Our printing house is backward and is damaged by the war.

Q: What guidelines does the Bureau of External Publications use to decide which books are translated?

A: The cultural ministry must judge which book reaches international standards, then the Export-Import Bureau decides on requirements of readers in foreign countries.

Q: Does the bureau have any policy against translating books here that are anti-Marxist?

A: First of all, men working in the bureau never do such a thing—write an anti-Marxist book.

Q: But other books from other countries?

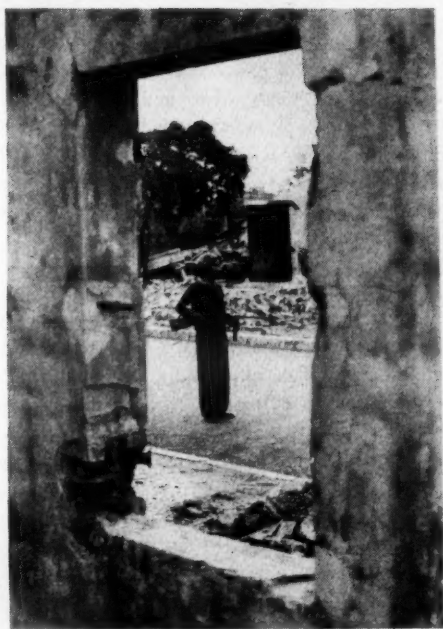
A: There is no decision forbidding this, but men working in the publishing bureau never translate anti-Marxist books.

Q: How can you be sure no one translates anti-Marxist books?

A: Because we are all in the same society and we enjoy freedom. We often have debated in clubs—in half-day meetings we speak out about different matters freely. As I mentioned, our freedom is not a kind of formal one, but a real one. You can speak whatever you are thinking. The Vietnamese



CBS correspondent John Hart (upper left) lunches at Hanoi's Thong Nhat Hotel with Luu Quy Ky, general secretary of North Vietnam's Journalists Association (see interview on preceding page). Other photos, all taken by Hart on assignment in the north, show (clockwise from upper right) a bombed residential section of Hanoi, a school boy and old women in Thai Binh Province, a Hai Phong poster, a militia girl in Hai Phong, "Hanoi Hannah" recording a propaganda broadcast and Mrs. Minnie Lee Gartley, mother of freed airman Lt. Mark Gartley, in one-person bomb shelter during air alert in Hanoi.



people are very patient and never adopt a brutal attitude toward ideological matters. Ideologies cannot be confiscated [he laughs]. So in the ideological struggle we must carry out persuasion.

The other form of persuasion is the radio. All day long in Haiphong, between broadcasting air raid alerts, the loudspeakers on the street are on with Hanoi's account of another victory or martial music, like their version of "Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder."

We are flying in the free sky.
Our team is defending the independence of the motherland,
Trying to destroy U.S. pirate pilots,
Trying to restore freedom and independence.
As President Ho said, "Long live the motherland."

Some militia girls at an anti-aircraft gun on the edge of Hanoi told me that what they did in their spare time was study, and "refresh [themselves] with music and listening to the radio." What kind of music? "Folk music and modern music that encourages the soldiers and the people to carry out production and fighting." I asked one of them, 25-year-old Nguyen Trong Binh, if she had any favorite romantic songs. "Yes" she said. "Would you sing one for me?" She had a good clear voice and the militia men and women called her "the singer." She was shy and didn't want to sing at first, but they persuaded her. One of her favorite "romantic" songs was the Song of Hanoi:

We hear the singing from our heart,
Our capitol is seething with the struggle against the U.S.
aggressors.
Oh dear girl, with gun on shoulder square,
Bordered star on the cap,
Where are you going, your eyes shining?
Where are you going with proud steps?
Days and nights you carried out practise on the practising
ground.
A sure contribution you make in this exploit.

Ky told me that radio Hanoi broadcasts in 14 languages, one of them English to the GI's in South Vietnam. I watched the original "Hanoi Hannah." (They call her that, too, having picked up the nickname in the Western press. My translator asked me what it meant, and I tried to explain that we find that kind of alliteration wry. But it was like trying to explain why people laughed at W.C. Fields calling himself Larson E. Whipsnade. I don't think he got it.)

Hanoi Hannah said she never thinks of the GI's as her enemy. "Rather, I think of them as young Americans that have been drafted into the U.S. Army against their will, as young Americans that have been misled by the U.S. authorities to fight this immoral war in Vietnam." After awhile, you came to understand that answers to most questions would come back as homilies against the war and the bombing or in support of their official policy of distinguishing the American people, the GI's and even the pilots from the "genocide policy of the Nixon Administration." She insisted her broadcasts were not propaganda. I asked her, "Do you speak the point of view of the government of North Vietnam?"

"Well, the Voice of Vietnam is the voice of the people of Vietnam, I think."

"Is that the same thing as the government here?"

"Well, you may think of it as you like."

"Well, I'm curious to know your concept of it."

"Well, when we say the people it could be understood as the government."

She had learned her English in Hanoi and had never been to a Western country. She thought of herself as a journalist giving news, "the truth about the Vietnam issue," she said.

I told her many American journalists see their role as the adversary, examining their government, reporting its weaknesses and its mistakes to the people. What did she think about that kind of journalism?

"I think journalists are free to give their opinions. It depends on what regime".

It was, I felt, the most candid political discussion I had with a North Vietnamese.

The Short, Unhappy Life of LA

BY GREGG KILDAY

"LA." I loved the way she said "LA"; I love the way everybody says "LA" on the Coast; it's their one and only golden town when all is said and done.

—Jack Kerouac, On The Road

LA. It is a magical name, incantatory in its power, a name that entrepreneur Max Palevsky and editor Karl Fleming hoped would add its glamorous mystique to the tabloid weekly they began publishing in Los Angeles last July. "Others—those Outsiders—say Los Angeles is imponderable, vulgar, freaky, brash, lonely, lost, beautiful—a city suffering from perennial identity crisis," *LA* editorialized in an initial promotional issue. "Using responsible investigative reporting, intensely personal writing, critical essays and vivid portraits on every aspect of life, *LA* is going to peel back a few layers of myth from the Los Angeles onion and lay bare its real character." Yet, *LA* never had a chance to get below the city's skin. After five confused months, *LA* suspended publication, a victim of editorial indecision, unrealistic financial expectations and irresolvable personal tensions. Ironically, the gothic details of *LA*'s short, unhappy life tend to confirm rather than disprove the Los Angeles myth.

In December, 1971, Bel Air multi-millionaire Max Palevsky, 48, was not yet widely known as one of the largest—and more fickle—of George McGovern's campaign contributors. He was instead the Xerox board member with one foot in the youth culture, the man who bailed out Jann Wenner's over-extended Straight Arrow Publications with a reported investment of \$200-250,000. It had been a shrewd investment—for even if its parent company was shaky, *Rolling Stone* was already headed for success—and Palevsky was eager to try his luck on a publishing venture in his hometown of Los Angeles.

Through a mutual tennis partner, Karl Fleming, 45, learned of Palevsky's intentions. Fleming had come to Los Angeles in 1965 to serve as *Newsweek*'s bureau chief, bringing with him an impressive background in civil rights coverage. "Karl was considered to be a good administrator while he was interested in doing it," says one *Newsweek* staffer, but Fleming eventually tired of the administrator's role. In the fall of 1970, Fleming left the bureau to

become a roving contributing editor, leaving behind a wardrobe of Ivy League suits to don fading jeans and dungaree jackets, the accoutrements of California hip. "Karl really hoped to become the major-domo of reporters in this country," the *Newsweek* man continues. "He wanted to stay in Southern California, but he also wanted no holds barred on his territory and privilege." Fleming also nursed a desire to edit his own newspaper. Suddenly, Palevsky was offering him the opportunity.

Los Angeles was obviously in need of a vital, middle-ground weekly. During the summer of 1971, the once hefty *Los Angeles Free Press*, its schizophrenic success built on strident radical politics and kinky personal classifieds, had split in two, and neither the surviving *Free Press* nor the rebellious *Staff* managed to carry off either the editorial authority or the financial vitality of the original. While *Los Angeles* and *Coast* magazines appeared on the stands monthly, both tended toward the provincial tub-thumping more appropriate to chamber of commerce publications. And it was already an open secret that *West*, the Sunday feature magazine of *The Los Angeles Times*, was suffering from lack of advertising, though no one had predicted it would succumb before the end of '72.

Ideally, Fleming and Palevsky would have liked to fill the gap with a slick, weekly magazine, but costs—which would have easily run into the millions—proved prohibitive. So without really giving much thought to the rough terrain ahead, Palevsky offered to put up \$225,000, which he expected would support a tabloid weekly for its first year of publication, at which time the paper was expected to become self-supporting with a circulation of 50,000-100,000. Fleming and Palevsky would be equal partners in the corporation; Fleming would serve as editor, Palevsky, publisher. Why was \$225,000 expected to do the job? "The figures we came up with were absurd," Fleming says in retrospect. "We got the figure right off the fucking wall, it was just as simple as that."

In their enthusiasm, Palevsky and Fleming certainly did make the business of publishing a newspaper a good deal simpler than they had any right to expect. When *LA*'s 40-man staff began assembling in mid-May, marketing studies had yet to be done, promotion had not begun, distribution problems had yet to be faced, type styles and layout had not been decided. Lawrence Dietz, a Los Angeles freelancer and former editor of the shortlived *Cheetah*, was

meanwhile involved in a separate effort to produce a Los Angeles weekly (now tentatively titled *LA is*, it is scheduled to appear next month). He speculates that a competition developed between the two papers. Both hoped to lay claim to the name *LA*; the first one into print would win the title. Fleming denies that his *LA* was thus forced into print prematurely. "I was aware of those guys trying to get off the ground," he says. "I may have been minimally impressed that the guy out there first had some slight edge. I don't mean to be slighting, but I simply chose to ignore them."

But why did Fleming and Palevsky also ignore the nuts and bolts preparation a project like *LA* required? Palevsky, who had initially intended to oversee the business side of things, became increasingly involved in the McGovern campaign. In March, he was hospitalized for arterial problems requiring open heart surgery, further limiting the time he could devote to the weekly. Meanwhile, Fleming was caught up in a wild goose chase, the D.B. Cooper affair, that began on the night of January 31 when he received a phone call from a man offering to put him in touch with Cooper, the vanished hijacker who parachuted out of a Northwest Orient Airlines 727 with \$200,000 between Portland and Seattle on Thanksgiving Eve, 1971.

A baroque series of phone conversations and secret meetings finally led Fleming to a clandestine interview outside Seattle with a man who purported to be Cooper.

Three weeks after the flamboyant hijacking, a letter signed by Cooper, already something of a local folk hero, appeared in a Reno newspaper, justifying the crime as "the fastest and most profitable way to gain a few last grains of piece of mind" for a man with terminal illness. Intrigued by the letter, Fleming placed classified ads in several Northwest newspapers—a technique he had used successfully once before to smoke out an underground radical terrorist—inviting Cooper to contact him. The man who called on January 31 said Cooper was willing to sell his story for \$30,000 plus another \$15,000 payable upon publication.

From the moment Fleming expressed interest in the deal, he was plunged into the looking-glass world of a Hitchcock thriller. Since *Newsweek*, where Fleming was still employed, refused to put up the money, Palevsky provided the needed \$30,000. A baroque series of phone conversations and secret meetings finally led Fleming to a clandestine interview outside Seattle with a man who purported to be Cooper. Fleming taped and filmed the interview; "Cooper" handed over three \$20 bills he claimed bore serial numbers matching those among the missing \$200,000 as proof of his identity. But Fleming could not check out any of the details of his story for fear of revealing "Cooper" to the police.

Fleming, who was married on March 4, spent his honeymoon at Palevsky's Palm Springs home transcribing the tapes. He hoped to arrange simultaneous publication of the story in *Newsweek* and *LA*. There was also the possibility of a book and motion picture. Profits would be split between Palevsky (40%), Fleming (40%) and D.B. Cooper's defense fund (20%). "Originally," Fleming later wrote, "I saw the Cooper story as a fitting curtain act at *Newsweek* . . . and a fitting curtain-raiser for *LA*." But daily the situation grew more complex as the news, publicity and entrepreneurial aspects of the story became hopelessly entwined. Fleming saw himself as the man who knew too much. Should Cooper ever be brought to court, Fleming planned to fall back on his newsman's rights under the First Amendment to justify his involvement. But if he waited too long before breaking the story, could he not also be accused of aiding and abetting a criminal?

In mid-April, four executives from Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., and Brooks Thomas, the firm's chief legal counsel, met with Fleming in Los Angeles. Thomas says that he made the trip on the understanding that Cooper was about to turn himself in. Fleming says that he had only promised that Cooper would surrender the \$200,000. Harper & Row would not touch the story unless Cooper surrendered himself along with the money. Fleming says that Thomas threatened to turn over the information to the FBI. Thomas says that he simply warned Fleming to hold onto the information no longer.

Fleming, who had resigned from *Newsweek* April 15 (shortly before, Platypus Publications, *LA*'s parent company, had been formed so that Fleming could continue to claim newsman's privilege), quickly turned the story over to his former *Newsweek* editors in New York, some of whom were skeptical but who prepared an elaborate cover story on the incident in case the facts proved out. Simultaneously, Fleming's lawyer informed the FBI so that they might investigate the case before it appeared in print. Almost immediately, the FBI discovered that the numbered bills were fraudulent. *Newsweek* killed the story. On June 3, two Seattle men were arrested and charged with four counts of federal fraud.

Fleming now returned to the complicated task of fashioning a newspaper, only to discover that like the curiously mismatched platypus for which his company was named, *LA* had yet to settle on a viable identity. Palevsky remembers that he himself "wanted something for the intelligent reader out here, something that reflected political realities, something like *The Village Voice*." Fleming talked more about "the nonpolitical drift" the paper would take. "We are not out to save the world," he said. "We'd just like to show people how to get a good honest plumber. . . . Service used to be the primary function of the old country newspapers. We plan to put out a sophisticated country paper in one of the most advanced civilizations in the world." In retrospect, Palevsky says, "I think Karl's interests are maybe a little more journalistic, mine more political and intellectual," but adds that editorial content was never a source of contention between the two. Fleming's nonideological approach was strengthened by his choice of Bob Sherrill as managing editor. A genial, rumpiled man, Sherrill had served as an *Esquire* editor for eight years. "We are going to approach stories as if we are a Dostoevski rather than a Cronkite," Fleming promised, somewhat grandly.

An able and experienced staff was clearly required to execute such high ambitions, but local writers who felt comfortable with Fleming's editorial style and/or were willing to work for maximum salaries of \$150 a week were not easy to find. Ultimately, Fleming hired four reporters, ranging in age from 22 to 27. Two were natives of California, all had some sort of journalistic background, but all admit they were hardly prepared for the multiple demands on their talents and energies *LA* would make. Fleming, who fired *LA*'s business manager prior to the newspaper's first issue, was attempting to handle details of business, promotion and editorial direction single-handedly. Sherrill, accustomed to the leisurely pace and gentlemanly editing at *Esquire*, was overwhelmed by the weekly deadlines. "Most of the folks had talent," Sherrill said, "but we didn't have the time or money to develop it. Both Karl and I were so involved in the processes of putting out the paper that we couldn't help them as much as we should have."

The reporters complained that Fleming's decisions were often arbitrary and autocratic. Fleming bridled at such internal criticism. "I do not believe that a newspaper can be run democratically, although to a large extent it did operate democratically here," he later said. "Some of the reporters were young and immature, not used to self-discipline." In the end, Fleming was unable to bridge the gaps in age and experience that existed between him and his staff. By October, two of the original four reporters had been fired. Whatever personal tensions were responsible, it does appear that as an editor Fleming failed to inspire either trust or loyalty in his reporters.

LA's relationship with freelancers was even less encouraging. Able to pay only \$20-50 an article, *LA* complicated its problems by creating its own credibility gap. A number of freelancers report that Fleming greeted their ideas enthusiastically, but was irritated and evasive when asked to discuss fees. David Fitzpatrick, a freelance writer seeking employment with *LA*, was assigned a trial article on a crime-ridden suburb which took him a week to research, for which he was paid \$50. Although Fleming was pleased with the article, he told Fitzpatrick further trial work would be necessary before he could be hired. Fleming says he offered Fitzpatrick \$100 a week. Fitzpatrick, who refused the offer, claims it was \$50. Fleming had little use for such complaints: "I was laying everything on the line," he says. "Those young people were laying nothing there."

Others were disappointed in the relatively proper veneer *LA* maintained. Although *LA* often sported sensational headlines (CHILDREN FOR SALE, THEY STEPPED ON MY LEFT EYE), Fleming was known to balk at counterculture slang and four-letter words, fearing they would lead readers to identify *LA* with Los Angeles' many sexploitation tabloids. *LA* also generally steered clear of any coverage of Los Angeles' demimonde. For example, Sherrill rejected a freelance piece on a Mr. Nude America contest. However dubious its claims to attention were, the event was later covered by *The Village Voice*. "LA," noted one observer, "was a traditional newspaper wearing the patina of an alternative operation."

While such problems can be attributed to the confused expectations *LA* engendered, the paper's largest lapse in editorial judgment was a sin of commission—Fleming's decision to present the D.B. Cooper affair in a three-part series whose first segment (Oct. 21) was headlined, *THE D.B. COOPER STORY: THE SKYJACKER WHO GOT AWAY WITH IT*. Inside, under Fleming's byline, appeared a lengthy, new-journalistic recreation of Cooper's scheme, as well as a photograph of the man who claimed to be Cooper captioned: "Fleming clandestinely interviewed D.B. Cooper outside Seattle." Only in the last three paragraphs did Fleming give the reader warning with the off-hand disclaimers that "the foregoing narrative was related to me by the man I believed to be Cooper . . . doubts about whether I had the right man would arise later."

The second installment continued in much the same, arguably deceptive vein. Only the third and final piece told the full story of Fleming's

gratuitous recognition of the fraud. Fleming rather lamely defended the approach by explaining to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, "I wanted the reader to experience it just exactly as I did. It's an adventure story as much about me as about D.B. Cooper, and I wanted to put the reader in my shoes. If the reader was reasonably alert, he would have seen in the press that these guys had been busted by the FBI." But it really looked as if Fleming just wouldn't let go of the story that got away.

A cover profile of writers Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne also led *LA* into a minor controversy: Fleming asked the Dunnes to grant writer Perry Deane Young an interview. The resulting article asked the question, "Why, the discussion of her goes . . . does she need him?" Dan Wakefield, a friend of the Dunnes, was so angered by what he called "the low-grade gossip speculation" of the piece that he fired off an open-letter to West Coast writers of his acquaintance "suggesting they not tarnish their integrity by having any dealings" with Fleming's publication. Although any good publication should ruffle feathers, the incident can also be viewed as suicidally brash. "The Dunnes are the kind of people you should have writing for you," argues Dietz, Fleming's competitor. "You shouldn't be writing about them."

Yet, for all its faults, *LA* was slowly finding itself. An associate editor, Bill Cardoso, was hired and the surviving writers discovered that, when working through Sherrill and Cardoso, their work improved. By November, three new reporters had come aboard, the *LA* logo and the body type were reduced in size, theme issues on subjects like dogs and beaches were abandoned, and examples of serious investigative reporting began appearing in the newspaper. In addition, *LA* regularly published consumer guides. Its listings, designed and compiled by Jim MacKenzie and Anne Taylor Fleming, added to a more complete view of the city. And film reviewer Steven Farber, football star Lance Rentzel and syndicated columnist Nicholas Von Hoffman contributed weekly columns.

Despite *LA*'s editorial improvement, it continued to languish financially. Lacking a significant promotion campaign, it could not lick the distribution problems endemic to L.A.'s far-flung geography. Fleming, who had little money to spend on promotion, himself fell victim to the media's charms with its lure of free publicity. "I was on virtually every radio station and on all the TV stations, some several times," he says. "Yet it was incredibly depressing to go around town and discover people who were not just not reading *LA*, but who hadn't even heard of the paper."

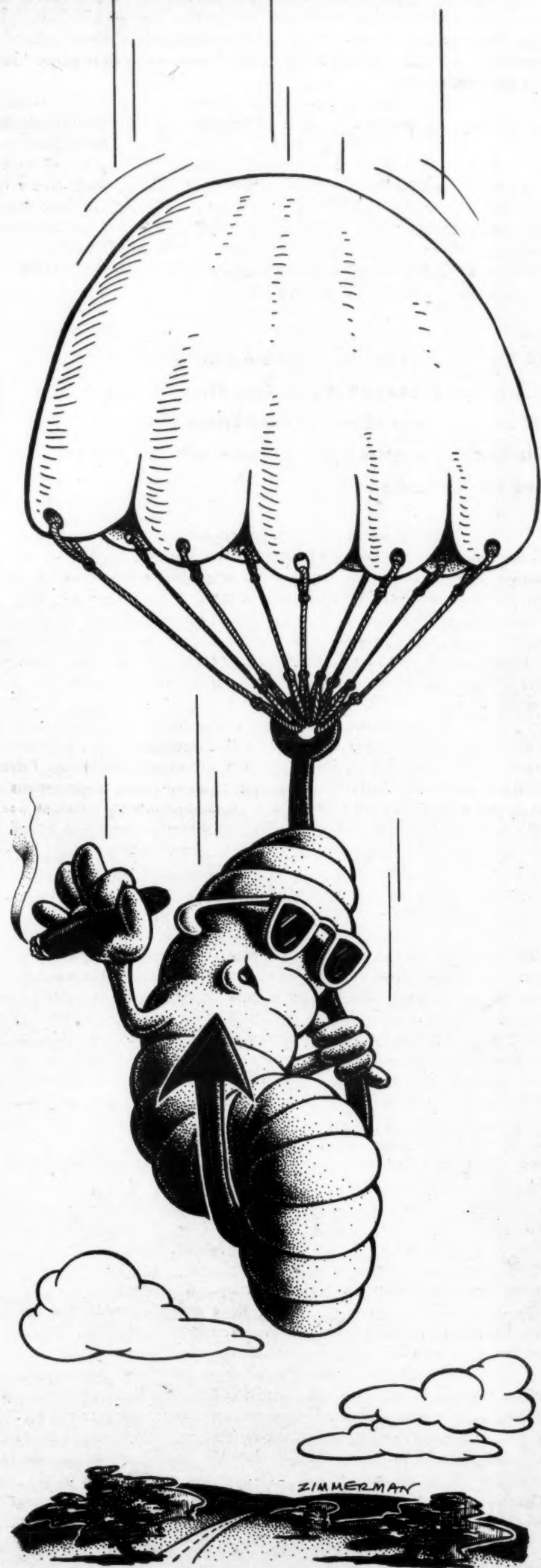
In November, Herb Yager left Allen Landsburg Productions to join *LA* as publisher; Palevsky moved up to the title of president and board chairman. Yager set about tightening up the business operations. Circulation, at the time, ranged from 5-10,000 per week. Advertising amounted to 5-10 pages per week at \$300 a page. Weekly operating expenses averaged \$10,000. By the end of November, *LA* is estimated to have cost Palevsky \$300,000.

With Palevsky's permission, Yager oversaw *LA*'s move from its original offices in Westwood to larger, though still modest, quarters in Beverly Hills, as well as the installation of new typographical equipment. On Dec. 8, Fleming and Yager met with Palevsky in his Bel Air home to present their latest projections. They had plans for a \$100,000 promotion effort, including a direct mail campaign. Continued operations would require Palevsky to increase his investment to \$500,000 by the end of March. To run to the end of 1973, it would cost him \$750,000-1,000,000. Fleming left the meeting secure in his belief that Palevsky would continue to underwrite the publication—at least through March. But apparently no such commitment was made.

In fact, there is reason to suspect that Palevsky had begun to grow disenchanted with the project even earlier. Richard Koff, manager of *Playboy*'s new publications division, reports that Hugh Hefner received a letter from Palevsky in early December feeling out *Playboy*'s interest in investing in *LA*. Palevsky says he knows of no such letter. A.J. Languth, who is preparing an *Esquire* profile on Palevsky, further theorizes that \$200,000 may be a magic number for Palevsky, the amount of seed money he required to launch his original company, Scientific Data Systems, as well as that which rescued *Rolling Stone*. When *LA* gobbled up Palevsky's initial investment, the impatient millionaire's loyalty probably waned. "My support was all a function of how the paper was running," is all that Palevsky will say. "First, its circulation was appalling. You wonder if it's worth the effort for a circulation of only 6,000. And secondly, the level of writing I had hoped for just didn't appear."

In any event, the day after the Bel Air meeting, the spectre of D.B. Cooper returned. Palevsky, about to leave for Europe on a honeymoon, received a government subpoena to appear at the Seattle trial of the two men accused in the Cooper scheme. Palevsky, who wanted to remain clear of the case, was furious. The next Tuesday, *LA*'s comptroller called Palevsky's secretary to request additional funds—throughout *LA*'s existence, Palevsky had kept firm control of the purse strings—and was told no more money would be forthcoming.

(continued on page 16)



(THE BIG APPLE)

FHA Blackout

The following examination of the scant coverage of recent Federal Housing Authority scandals was written by Owen Moritz, who covers housing for the Daily News:

Donald C. Carroll was a mortgage officer for a Long Island bank, a minor power in Suffolk County Republican circles and for 10 months, head of the metropolitan New York office of the Federal Housing Administration—an office that dictates much of the fate of slum and suburban neighborhoods.

Last September 26, Carroll was named in a criminal information and four top officers of the FHA office were indicted for federal crimes from conspiracy to bribe-taking. Carroll pleaded guilty to accepting bribes from a major mortgage company. The next day, he was fired and has since drifted away. So pervasive was the corruption that 13 major officials in all, from underwriters to mortgage credit appraisers in the FHA's head office in Hempstead, L.I. were indicted and suspended within a six-month period.

The whole FHA scandal in fact sounds like something out of early Lincoln Steffens—corruption, influence-peddling, real estate speculation, the shadowy role of banks and most unpardonable of all, the destruction of sound inner-city neighborhoods. Some \$24 million was lost on FHA properties in Brooklyn alone; another \$20 million is in foreclosure. Whole neighborhoods were bled dry by a sleazy collection of FHA appraisers, voracious real estate operators (not above using blockbusting and welfare families to clean out streets) and mortgage companies with lines of credit to the pillars of American banking.

Headline stuff, all right, but the sorriest aspect of the FHA tragedy is the headlines. There were few, very few, particularly when they mattered—during the Presidential campaign. The FHA scandals first broke last March, but reached a high (or low) point last September and probably posed more of a potential embarrassment to local and national Republicans than ITT, Watergate and Soviet grain deals. Carroll, for one thing, had been cleared by Rockefeller and Nixon aides; more important, the ultimate cost of the scandals, now put at \$200 million in New York, will be borne by suburban homeowners paying off FHA mortgages.

The reason the FHA remains a low-visibility scandal, despite its enormity, results from actions by Federal Judge Anthony Travia, the man presiding over the FHA caseloads. On Sept. 15, eleven days before the Carroll *et al.* case broke, Travia imposed a blackout on virtually all aspects of the FHA case. "I don't feel we ought to be making statements for the press," Travia told lawyers for the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District

(Brooklyn). "I have found in my experience that the press never reports them right anyway... unless you write it out for them and most of the time they won't take a writing [sic] because they won't believe it."

The effect of the Travia ruling was to silence officials most intimate with the case. The ongoing FHA mess (it's now edging into its second year) is terribly complicated, but once the Travia order came down, there were no briefings to clarify things and little cooperation. The Carroll case broke in a vacuum. In a previous round of FHA indictments, the U.S. Attorney's office gave reporters ample background material and time to study the documents. In the Carroll case, there was none of that. The grand jury indictments were held up for release until 3:30 p.m., leaving barely enough time to make the papers. And it showed: The *News*, *Times* and *Newsday* ran the stories inside for two days and everyone else practically ignored it.

Sen. McGovern did get a shot in, telling a Saturday night political dinner on Sept. 30 that the FHA under Nixon had become a "sewer of bribery and fraud, infested with corrupt officials, real estate speculators and shady mortgage companies." But the dinner's late hour meant McGovern would make only the *News*' last Sunday edition (page 20) and the *Times* not at all.

That was the size of it. Government sources dried up in a scandal that cries for public scrutiny—now more than ever. George Romney's office in Washington issued the traditional apology press release at the time of Carroll's arrest, then abruptly withdrew it because of the judge's order. One person who saw the release called it "thoroughly innocuous."

Earlier this month, on Jan. 11, a key figure in the Carroll case—a clever mortgage banker named Stanley Sirote—pleaded guilty to four counts of bribe-giving. The *Times* gave it four paragraphs on page 30; *Newsday*, three paragraphs; the *News*, nothing.

Why did Travia do it? He and his aides have repeatedly refused to explain. His oral order, the only thing we have to work on, was in response to a request for no pre-trial statements brought by lawyers for the president of Eastern Service Corp., a colossal mortgage company that in 1971 handled \$233 million worth of mortgages. The firm was indicted last March.

One government source says the judge doesn't want another Sam Sheppard case on his hands. The trouble is the FHA mortgage frauds are not comparable to Sheppard's sensational murder; they're more like the salad oil capers of Anthony DeAngelis and the fertilizer tank mortgages of Billie Sol Estes. But even DeAngelis and Billie Sol provided a focus, a metaphor, that the immensely complicated FHA frauds don't have.

What government lawyers fear, I sus-

pect, is not a mistrial, but publicity that might force a change of venue and with it, a hardship on family men. Yet it's a risk worth taking because, as it happens, publicity is precisely what's needed here. For one thing, continued public attention might have brought forward hundreds of low-income blacks and Puerto Ricans, the real casualties of the FHA mess who have fled and scattered. No need here to go into the mechanics of the program. But real estate operators, backed by the mortgage companies, seized on a well-meaning federal program of inner city help to induce thousands of poor families into buying creaky old houses at vastly inflated prices. If the family couldn't afford the payments, the conspirators merely arranged a phony credit rating. The gimmick was that the feds guaranteed the mortgage payments. When the inevitable foreclosure came, the mortgage companies hit the FHA for the insurance at the inflated amount.

Hearings by the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee in Washington last May and June heard sordid tale after sordid tale of the mortgage frauds. But to date, neither the Departments of Justice or Housing and Urban Development has seen fit to follow up with appropriate actions of its own—a second reason for the need for publicity. Justice and HUD won't act, I suspect, until the press prods them.

For another thing, the mortgage companies and real estate speculators ride rampant because in progressive New York they thrive without regulation. Neither the Banking Department nor the Department of State regulates them. (The Department of State does regulate real estate brokers, but the more industrious among them have been known to surrender their license to escape departmental jurisdiction.) The legislation that would have caught up with them was vetoed by Gov. Rockefeller last year.

Moreover, the publicity lid only fuels the stock of those mortgage companies in trouble. Because of the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Accetta and Jack Blum, counsel and investigator for the Senate Antitrust Committee, the indicted mortgage firms are reeling from earlier disclosures. The court-enforced quiet makes it that much easier to unload them.

In the end, the stakes are too high for anything but public exposure. The FHA scandals are one of those vast conspiracies in which a good many people who can't afford it are underwriting it. I don't mean the poor conned into the program and now embittered to the point of total alienation. I mean the homeowner out in Levittown and Massapequa who dutifully contributes one half per cent each month as part of his mortgage payments to a vast reserve in Washington—the kitty that is being tapped and depleted to pay off the fast-buck operators.

(THE BIG APPLE)

Good News, Bad News

Women editorial employees at *Newsweek* may soon be signing an agreement with management that would result in the "integration of women into all editorial departments," as associate editor Lynn Young describes it. Negotiators for both sides are putting into writing the terms of the agreement, worked out in November in response to a Federal EEOC complaint filed by the women last spring. No one is yet willing to be specific about details, but it is known that the settlement will provide for arbitration on complaints brought by individuals or by the women's committee as a whole.

While these negotiations were taking place, the compliance review section of the State Human Rights Division was conducting an investigation of discriminatory practices toward women at Time Inc. It concluded that "the company has not moved as fast as we would have liked," according to Ralph Katz, a division spokesman. The review was part of an agreement reached after the attorney-general's office filed a complaint on behalf of 140 Time Inc. women in May, 1970. During the past three years the number of women writers at *Newsweek* has been increased from one to ten, while the process has been reversed at *Time* (from seven to five), although the latter magazine now has a woman senior editor, Ruth Brine. (In fairness, the masthead as a whole has diminished considerably as a result of corporate belt-tightening.) But Time Inc. women don't seem to be mobilized for action at this moment, partly because the death of *Life* has put many jobs throughout the company in jeopardy.

Talks are just about to begin at *Newsday*, where in November women editors and reporters submitted to management a 117-page report based on a year of research into the position of women at the paper. They studied promotions (only four *Newsday* women can be said to hold jobs above "entry" level) and pay given to stories about women. Publisher William Attwood responded by asking the women to discuss their grievances. This month they will present him with a list of proposals.

At the *Times*, negotiations began last year after a petition was drawn up and sent to publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger and managing editor A.M. Rosenthal. Since the talks seem to be going well, the women refuse to discuss their progress with outsiders, presumably for fear of harming their cause. They are said to be pushing for the promotion of women to management levels and for the equalization of pay.

Knapp Flap

Winding up 31 months of investigation, the Knapp Commission issued its third and final

report on police corruption in New York City at the end of December. It charged that on several occasions high-level police officials had ignored federal allegations that some of their men were guilty of serious crimes. The commission also reported that in 1971 well over half of the city's police force was involved in some form of corruption.

These last Knapp findings were contained in a 283-page document. Traditionally, and for obvious reasons, when a complex report is issued, newsmen get copies at least a few days early with the understanding that they will hold their stories until a specific date. Following the customary procedure, the Mayor's office imposed a release date for the Knapp report of Thursday, Dec. 28 at 10:30 A.M., in time to make that day's afternoon papers and broadcast news. The morning papers would run the story the following day. Knapp Commission counsel Michael Armstrong distributed advance copies in the form of page proofs to the *Times*, the *News* and the *Post*. Copies of the unpublished draft went to the newsmagazines and The Associated Press. Other news organizations (including United Press International, which was overlooked unintentionally) were to pick up their copies in the Mayor's press office by 5 P.M. Wednesday.

Shortly after 7 P.M. that day, *Times* police reporter David Burnham was at work on another story when he was told by assistant metropolitan editor George Barrett that the desk at the AP local bureau had called. The AP had heard an erroneous rumor that the *Times* was about to break the Knapp release date. Burnham was reminded of a foul-up the previous August, when WNBC-TV broke the embargo on the Knapp Commission's interim report. In that instance, the *Times* and the *News* conferred and decided to ignore the early release. Now Burnham urged Barrett to phone the *News* in case there was a need for a similar deal.

Instead, Barrett discovered that the *News* itself was planning to run the Knapp story, which meant, of course, that the *Times* would have to re-do its front-page. Fortunately for the *Times*, Burnham's two stories on the report, though not in type, were already written and edited, with only a couple of boxes remaining to be done. As Burnham wrote these, the bullpen, under the supervision of news editor Lewis Jordan, made room for four columns of type-space for just about half of Burnham's copy. Both stories made the later edition in their entirety, though the second was carried on an inside page—not on page one, as planned.

Predictably, the broken embargo sparked some angry reactions. "My interest was in seeing that the story did not receive a sensational treatment," says Knapp counsel Armstrong, who was also outraged by the fact

that *News* reporter Paul Meskil chose to emphasize charges that City Council President Sanford Garelik had accepted gratuities while on the force—an aspect of the report that Armstrong and Burnham considered relatively minor. (KNAPP REPORT RAPS GARELIK, read the *News*' page-one headline.) Armstrong points out that since the UPI had received the report at 5 P.M., only two hours before the early "night owl" edition of the *News* hit the streets, "the press around the country got a half-baked story."

Times metropolitan editor Arthur Gelb called *News* managing editor Mike O'Neill to protest ("I told him we could do the same thing," says Gelb, "He agreed"), but actually the paper that suffered most was the *Post*, which would have been the chief beneficiary had the embargo been observed. *Post* reporter Andrew Porte had to hurriedly transform his piece into a second-day story focusing on reaction to the report.

Meskil, who claims never to have "broken a release date in my 30 years in the business," insists that Armstrong didn't make it clear that there was a "hard and fast" embargo on the report. ("I flatly deny that," says Armstrong. "And besides, what's a half-embargo? That sounds like the old saying about being a little bit pregnant.") Day city editor Mike Clendenin says that when asked whether there was an embargo, Meskil said he wasn't sure. "We had been burned once before," says Clendenin, referring to the August incident. "So this time, we went ahead and used it . . . If we had wanted to screw the *Times*, we wouldn't have put it in our first edition," thereby enabling the *Times* to catch up. "I think what they're upset about is the Garelik angle," he adds. "That turned the report into a political story." (Garelik is running for mayor.)

"It's highly improbable that any newspaperman would make a mistake on a release date," says Burnham, who maintains that Armstrong was very specific with him. What is more, if this was indeed an accident, the *News* seems to be having a run of them. The paper recently broke another embargo—on the release of a report by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, scheduled for the morning papers of Monday, Jan. 15. The *News* ran the story Sunday because of an error on the part of the weekend copy desk, according to managing editor Michael O'Neill. In this case, the *Times* decided to wait.

The embargo battle seems to be heating up, however. On Jan. 24 the *News* alerted us to the fact that *Times* reporter Gene Maeroff had broken a release date on an announcement by State University trustees. When questioned, Maeroff said he ignored the embargo because he "figured the *News* probably would."

New York Post

Amsterdam News

VARIETY

VOICE

THE NEW YORKER

1010 WINS

Panelist

LOAN
EASY
ONE

REPEAT
THE
QUESTION

MEET THE PRESS GAME

Guest

QUOTE
FROM
OLD
SPEECH

STALL
FOR
COMMERCIAL

THROW
YOUR
BLOCKBUSTER

PASS TO
ANOTHER
SUBJECT

ATTACK
THE
PRESS

SAY
THANK
YOU

BY MINDY NIX

The National Broadcasting Company threw a big party at the Statler-Hilton in Washington last month to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of "Meet The Press." Actually, the date was last Nov. 6, but Congress was not in town at the time so NBC decided to hold off until Jan. 17, when not only Congress but almost Everyone Else was on hand for the Inauguration. Indeed, most of official Washington was invited to the fete, as was every guest and reporter who had ever appeared on the program. And no less than 1,500 showed up for the buffet reception. James Farley, the first guest back in 1947, was there. So were Hubert Humphrey, the record-holding politician with 22 shots, and Richard Wilson, the *Des Moines Register & Tribune* columnist who has cross-examined the mighty on 174 occasions. A quick sample of the crowd also included Melvin Laird, Katharine Graham, Edward M. Kennedy, Peter Lisagor, Roy Cohn, David Broder, John Erlichmann, Clifton Daniel, Edmund Muskie, James J. Kilpatrick, J. W. Fulbright, David Kraslow and Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos, standing in for her husband who sent his regrets. To further note the anniversary, NBC took out full-page advertisements in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* offering an heroic sketch of Grand Old Inquisitor Lawrence E. Spivak over the observation that "Meet The Press" has "examined every significant issue that has arisen during its long life, and in the most cogent way—by questioning the leaders most concerned. Thus what happens during 'Meet The Press' on Sunday is often front-page news on Monday."

As an advertising pitch, that's not half bad. The "cogent" business is, of course, nonsense, as regular viewing quickly demonstrates. But the whole exercise is, indeed, aimed at landing on page one. Twenty-seven years ago, Spivak dreamed up "Meet The Press" as a radio promotion for Mencken's *American Mercury* magazine. The publication is long gone, but MTP and its offspring—CBS' "Face The Nation" and ABC's "Issues And Answers"—continue in that promotional tradition. Their major corporate purpose is to produce a story, with appropriate credit for the network, in Monday's newspapers. To help assure this, every Sunday afternoon the programs' staffs rush scores of transcripts of that day's programs to the desk of every newspaper with a Washington bureau. Sunday's a slow news day, and this ready-made "news" can come in handy when a bureau or wire service reporter is scratching around for a lead story. Many network affiliates, too, splice portions of the programs into their Sunday evening news shows, thus picking up both some free material and some public-service points to display before the FCC come license renewal time.

No one at the networks seems at all bashful about any of this. "We love to make news on Sunday instead of just talking about it," says Sylvia Westerman, co-producer of "Face The Nation." NBC press releases boast that Spivak's "challenging questions continue to make headlines in the record-breaking interviews with national and international leaders." I&A and FTN keep bulging scrapbooks full of the newspaper articles that mention them; Spivak stores MTP's in file cases kept in a bathtub in his Washington home. "Issues And Answers" producer Peggy Whedon agrees with her counterparts that Monday morning newsmaking is "an important reason for the existence of the show—it matters a lot." But she goes on to say something more about the relationship between the program and its guests in government. "We court the guests the way they court us. Agnew knows that by appearing he's going to get publicity for himself in the next morning's *New York Times*, and we know we'll be mentioned, too. That way we do him a favor and we do ourselves a favor."

Just how much of a favor was indicated on ABC last fall. There was Frank Reynolds, moderator of I&A, peering over his glasses and the scrap of



copy paper in his hands, looking at Sen. George McGovern, guest for Oct. 22, just two weeks before the elections. "You have likened President Nixon to Adolf Hitler," said Reynolds, glancing down at the paper, "... how do you reconcile this with your position that issues should be rationally discussed and that rhetoric is counter-productive?" Reynolds' question was one of several prepared by Herb Klein's White House Office of Communications, a sort of do-it-yourself needle kit courtesy of the opposition. Klein's office shot the list across town to ABC the day before the show and followed up with a not-too-subtle telephone inquiry to I&A's Whedon later in the day. Had the list arrived? Oh yes, the list had arrived.

That the White House had dared attempt using a news program to put its opposition on the spot—and that it had succeeded—astonished many who either saw the program or read about it later. It shouldn't have. For the three Sunday news conference programs have always served primarily as conduits for communicating Administration positions and points of view, no matter who was in power. NBC, for example, says in its MTP press releases that the show brings its audience "a continuing roster of prominent people discussing significant issues of the day." Further, "outstanding persons in the news are interviewed by a panel of newsmen in a live, unrehearsed press conference." Both statements are true; both are part of the problem. That "roster of prominent people" is composed almost entirely of Washington's elected and appointed officials, along with an occasional foreign head of state. The "discussion of significant issues" flows from the questions of a select handful of the Washington press corps—men like Wilson, Lisagor and Broder and such middle-ground columnists as Clark Mollenhoff and Carl Rowan. These men are hardly fools, but rarely do they or their colleagues who appear on FTN or I&A ask truly penetrating questions. Reporters on all three shows, in fact, less often ask questions than simply afford opportunities for the guest to reply any way he wants. Here, for example, is an exchange on MTP (Jan. 14) between NBC's Robert McCormick and Rep. Gerald Ford, Republican leader of the House of Representatives:

McCORMICK: Congressman Ford, you are undoubtedly more aware than I am of the discontent in Congress among Republicans as well as Democrats—some of them at least. What will happen in Congress if we do not get a peace settlement in time? Will the President have any control left over Congress at all?

FORD: Mr. McCormick, I would prefer to look at the situation from the optimistic point of view that there will be some meaningful results. I think it would be unwise in this very critical, crucial stage, to speculate on what might come if things didn't turn out well. I think we ought to be hopeful. We ought to look at it optimistically and not make plans for something that might be unfortunate.

Over at "Issues and Answers" that same Sunday the questions were somewhat better, but hardly difficult. ABC correspondents Ted Koppel and Howard Tuckner were interviewing Sen. Nguyen Van Ngai, leader of the South Vietnamese delegation to the U.S., who said at one point:

You have to cling to ... the right to self-determination of South Vietnamese people ... the South Vietnamese people should be entitled to choose freely their own way of life ... through democratic process without any threat of repression. And we think that the Republic of Vietnam must be given a free choice and we are determined not to effect any prefabricated formula, impose an arbitrary formula on the South Vietnamese people.

Neither Koppel nor Tuckner thought it worth asking the senator to what degree he thought the Thieu regime was "democratic" and represented the South Vietnamese people.

On "Face The Nation" that day, the questions were slightly better still (as they often are), but CBS correspondents George Herman and Roger Mudd nevertheless did little more in their talk with Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield than confirm what everyone already knows: that Congress is impotent.

MUDD: How does that happen, Senator, that a third branch of government, the Congress, gives away its powers?

MANSFIELD: Well, since the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt, on occasions we've bowed to the Executive, and in so doing we've allowed the transference of some of our powers under the Constitution to the Executive Branch.

MUDD: But I mean why do you bow? Is it just easier to bow than to fight the President?

MANSFIELD: Easier in some instances, not knowing the full facts and details in others. A number of factors had to be considered.

Doubtless the participants on the three programs Jan. 14 will argue that the above excerpts don't give the full dimensions of the interviews. And it's true, they don't. But a careful reading of the three transcripts suggests that no great unfairness has been perpetrated. For even granting an occasional stinger question, all three exercises resemble nothing so much as a dusty civics text—gray, superficial and unimaginative. Part of the problem, of course, is in the way the programs are structured, which would frustrate even the most determined journalist (particularly on MTP, where five reporters share 30 minutes, minus commercial breaks). And yet, a public official by his very appearance may leave much of the audience (an estimated 15 million for the three programs) with the impression he is not hiding. After all, he has submitted to questioning by the elite of the Washington press corps on nationwide television? Who would dare accuse James R. Schlesinger, head of the Atomic Energy Commission, of hiding in such a public forum? John Finney of *The New York Times* Washington bureau might have, but he didn't. On "Meet The Press" Dec. 17 he asked Schlesinger if he had been offered the job of director of the Central Intelligence Agency. "No sir," replied Schlesinger, whose appointment was announced a few days later.

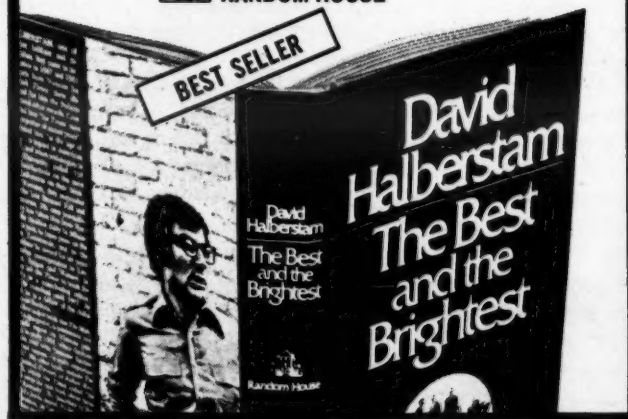
All three programs live up to their billings, to be sure, but their very intentions contain powerful, unspoken assumptions about how society works. The most obvious is, of course, that Washington is the mover and everywhere else the moved. This parochialism would be laughable except that NBC is probably correct in proclaiming MTP "television's most authoritative and influential public affairs program." All three define the issues and confine the debate through their choice of guests. MTP, for instance, has interviewed leaders who run the gamut from O'Brien (Larry) to Dole (Robert), Bundy (McGeorge) to Ball (George), Heller (Walter) to Schulz (George), Nixon (old) to Nixon (new). Other regulars include Hugh Scott and Melvin Laird. Humphrey, besides meeting the press a record 22 times, has appeared on I&A 14 times in the last six years and faced the nation four times since mid-1971. The programs' world view is also revealed by looking at who was *not* picked as an "outstanding person in the news." Going back to 1966, MTP chose not to interview Malcolm X, Bobby Baker, Adam Clayton Powell, Saul Alinsky, Rap Brown, Nicholas Johnson, Dick Gregory, any leader of the Women's Movement, any leader of the National Welfare Rights Movement, or any oil company president.

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RANDOM HOUSE



"If this were the 'Today' show we could bring on people from the full spectrum, but with just a half an hour a week you really can't wing it with someone who may not turn out to be interesting or articulate or representative," says ABC's Whedon. "Anyway, there are enough representative people around. We've had the North, the South, the black, the white, the Europeans, the Latins, the glamor gals and the glamor men, prisoners too." Prisoners? Well, Jimmy Hoffa did appear just after his release from Lewisburg but no other ex-inmates or prison reform spokesmen appear on the guest lists of this or the other two programs.

Of the three programs, MTP has adopted the most insular approach. Blacks, white ethnics, and women haven't fared very well there. Black "regulars" on the three programs range all the way from Roy Wilkins to Ron Dellums (after he became a Congressman). FTN did have David Hilliard of the Black Panther Party, also Michael Klonsky when he was National Secretary of SDS; Father James Groppi the Milwaukee priest, and Navajo Nation Chairman Peter MacDonald. I&A presented Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan but that's about it. Whedon says she has had some "far out" guests—Hoffa, Bernadette Devlin, Maurice Chevalier, and the Apollo 17 astronauts.

Sometimes, not ranking among "the representative" can make a difference to political candidates. That's what Shirley Chisholm argued when I&A did not originally include her in its debate between California primary front-runners Humphrey and McGovern. The FCC agreed and ordered the network to include her. MTP found itself under similar attack, only this time the network wasn't tagging front-runners, just deciding who was and who was not a bonafide "Democratic hopeful." NBC thought former Governor Terry Sanford and Representative Wilbur Mills were not. Sylvia Westerman, co-producer of CBS's FTN—which has strayed farthest from the Establishment for its guests—says it's more a matter of priorities. "We'd like to get into the world of ideas but there's always some screaming news story that we care more about. And there are only so many Sundays." Still another explanation comes from columnist Robert Novak, a frequent panelist on MTP. "If you had Muskie or Mel Laird one week, Abbie Rubin [sic] the next week, and a guy from the American Nazi Party or a Gay Liberationist the next, why I think that would be a distortion. To overemphasize the extremes would be a mistake." But extremists

are not really the issue. The question is why the thinking of leaders all along the spectrum goes unrepresented on the programs just because they are not big names in Washington, D.C.

The shows' fascination with Washington movers and shakers and visiting prime ministers or princes wouldn't be half as bad if that narrowness of vision did not extend to their choice of reporters. Many of them are network newsmen, on the whole a group not exactly known for tough questioning. I&A uses only ABC reporters—two of them each week. FTN uses two of CBS' own and one from the outside. MTP uses Spivak, an NBC reporter, and "big name" guest panelists like Novak. Every so often Pauline Frederick appears—usually when the guest is a woman (Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir in 1971). Carl Rowan is often called in when the subject is race or the cities. FTN's Westerman says "We do as much talent-scouting for panel members as we do for guests. This is a fast-moving program where you have to get a lot of questions in. Someone may be a great reporter but not a very good questioner." Both qualities, of course, can be found in, among others, I.F. Stone, William Rusher, Carey McWilliams, Hunter Thompson, Mary Perot Nichols, and David Halberstam. None has appeared on any of the programs. Even Mollenhoff, a former Nixon staff man now Washington correspondent of the *Des Moines Register & Tribune*, and a frequent panelist and great fan of MTP, concedes there is "some posturing, some concession to the guest."

Richard Nixon once wrote Lawrence Spivak to tell him that "the type of sharp incisive questioning that your panel and you in particular have always done is precisely the kind of national service that the Fathers meant to guarantee when they wrote 'freedom of the press' into the First Amendment." John Kennedy met the press eight times and described the program as the "fifty-first state." Hubert Humphrey called MTP "honest and courageous." Barry Goldwater wrote that it "has consistently met the highest standards of fair and penetrating news coverage." Doubtless "Issues And Answers" and "Face The Nation" would win similar accolades. No news programs that draw such praise from the men they question can be all that good.

'Peace' ...

continued from page 1

You had to be totally incredulous not to be sold." The simple act of reporting the President and Kissinger out on the limb put the press out on the limb as well. Reporting the Vietnam negotiating game has always been difficult. Journalists have had to put pieces and scraps of evidence together and guess at the whole picture. But here was Kissinger laying his prestige on the line publicly and telling the press that it had to guess no longer. It would have been foolhardy to go against him. Thus, most journalists suspended much of their natural skepticism about the government's war pronouncements. And thus, when reporting in the news, they tended to downplay facts that ran counter to optimism in the subsequent weeks.

But underlying this particular trap was another, more deeply seated trap—the structure of daily news operations and the structure of governmental-press relations. The first point is obviously the competitive pressures of journalism. A story had to be filed every day for the *Times* and the *Post*, and it had to be front page material. But the problem was what to write about. The substance of the negotiations was being closely held. The reporters thus felt themselves compelled to file stories on rumors, backgrounders, smiles and handshakes between Kissinger and the Hanoi chief negotiator, Le Duc Tho. When the negotiations were in progress in late November and then again in early December, the newspapers and the television networks featured smiles and handshakes. When the conferees left Paris, handshakes and smiles were no longer available, and the rumor stories took over—albeit clearly identified as rumors by the newsmen.

Competitive pressures for "news" also explain the vulnerability of newsmen to the Administration in Washington. The "news" has to be something new. If it is also important, so much the better. But an old, important fact (e.g., "the war continued today") seems less newsworthy than a new, less important development (e.g., an administration official saying on background that "he remains confident of eventual agreement.") As a result, fundamental facts are downplayed, marginal events are magnified and, most important, an American policymaker can make "news" whenever he wishes to give newsmen his opinions. The "news" tends to become what U.S. officials say each day.

Sources represented another structural problem. All of the newsmen covering this story properly took pains to label and grade their sources. Stories throughout the media abounded in unfelicitous phrases like—"so said a

high Administration official," or a "specialist," or a "Pentagon planner," or "a usually reliable source," or a "source close to the North Vietnamese delegation" (usually a French source or a Vietnamese neutralist living in Paris), and so forth. But source problems nevertheless arose when newsmen sought to reconcile stories from Communist and Communist-related sources with statements from American officials, or when they sought to match information they were getting from Henry Kissinger with information from any other American source.

Two important stories reportedly fell victim to the Communist/American source problem in late November. One was a story filed by Flora Lewis, the *Times* correspondent in Paris, which said that the negotiations were off track, if not on the rocks. The story came in to the *Times* foreign news editor, without any sources being mentioned. He went back to Lewis, who told him the source was "one step removed from the PRG [Provisional Revolutionary Government]." The source was not reliable or "hard" enough for the editor to deem the story fit to print, and he killed it. As a source on the *Times* explained to us: "There were no facts to support the skepticism. It was opinion, and opinions are for editorial writers and columnists." That may be a useful sentiment. But the fact remains that the *Times*' editors did not—and generally do not—apply the same standard to American sources. And they were not alone. A number of U.S. journalists outside the *Times* have told us that they discounted such stories because they thought the Communists were playing games and appearing more pessimistic than they really were. Thus reporting from Communist sources was greeted with healthy skepticism; yet American sources, whether or not they were playing games, by and large got the straight treatment.

Another story filed by Jonathan Randal, the *Post* Paris correspondent, was not killed and did make the front page—but in adulterated form. Writing on November 24, Randal accurately predicted that the November round would end in disagreement the next day. His story was run in the *Paris Herald Tribune*. But the *Post* editors decided, after some argument and soul-searching, to shuffle the Randal piece together with other reports under the byline, "From News Dispatches". According to one *Post* source, Randal's story seemed too hard when compared with more encouraging evidence available in Washington. The story that ran in the *Post* was still a good one, but its impact was diluted.

Reconciling Kissinger-inspired stories with not-for-attribution statements from other high American officials was an even more persistent and

difficult problem. Kissinger's private talks with reporters, editors, and bureau chiefs dominated the news stories perhaps as much as his drives to and from the Paris meeting places. He dominated the stories because everyone knew he was "the man" of foreign policy, and because he was telling at least some of the journalists he saw during this period that he and the President were the only fully informed sources in town. A breakfast or lunch or dinner conversation with Henry Kissinger gave the gratified recipient authority to knock down or water down stories from anyone else. Washington confers real power and status to the user of phrases like "Henry said at lunch the other day that . . ."

Thus did another *Times* story run afoul of the editors. According to sources outside the *Times* but familiar with the incident, on December 15, the day before the second Kissinger press conference announcing that things had come apart, William Beecher, the *Times* Pentagon correspondent, filed a highly prescient piece. He reported that Administration sources said that Hanoi had reneged on previous agreements, thereby derailing the negotiations, and that President Nixon would respond by resuming the bombing north of the 20th parallel. According to these sources, Beecher's story, which of course turned out to be basically correct, ran dead against the attitudes of the New York editors. The editors based their position on James Reston's recent conversations with Kissinger in Paris. Reston reportedly came away from these talks with the optimistic view that the last remaining major issue concerned the sovereignty of the Saigon government, and that if it could not be resolved to Thieu's satisfaction, the U.S. would regretfully sign without him. This was the thrust of his front page article which appeared with a Paris dateline on December 13.

Beecher, who refused to discuss any of these issues, had apparently gotten his information from Pentagon and State Department sources. Some speculate that these sources, in turn, were kept quite well informed by members of Kissinger's own staff and by the top political people in the White House. But in the face of countervailing impressions left with Reston by Kissinger himself, the *Times* decided Beecher's story needed rewriting—in part, to soften the impression his sources had tried to leave with him that the deadlock was the fault solely of the North Vietnamese. In its place, the *Times* ran a careful front page article, without anyone's byline, which pointed to signs of a deadlock but made no prediction about the future. Instead of scooping Kissinger on the day of his press conference, Beecher's story ran two days later, after Kissinger had already told his own version to the world.

Another structural trap for the press is one which plagues the government as well: the unhappy fact that credibility depends largely on consistency. It should not, when events can shift so rapidly, but for many readers and voters, it does. This explains, in part, the instinctive pessimism of most reporters covering Vietnam since the mid-1960's. As one of them told us, "You're only wrong once if you're a pessimist." And once having made a new commitment to relative optimism, it was hard to return to the pessimism of earlier days. One editor at the *Post* told us that, "We had to worry about the credibility of our publication. You mustn't get burned twice." A source at *Time* echoed his thought: "Having gone out on a limb with the spread on peace (the November 6 issue) made us cautious about moving toward strong pessimism." Reinforcing this consistency problem was a natural tendency to take comfort in numbers. Everyone was at least part way out on the optimism limb. If it broke off, each knew he would at least fall in such company as Nixon, Kissinger and his own competitors.

Finally, there is the trap of job definition. One Washington reporter told us that he was satisfied with his performance during the period: he had accurately reported the Administration's thinking, carefully labelling it as just that, and no more. And he is right. The press did this job well in its Washington news stories. But was it the right job? Indisputably, these stories had to be written. But they were played so repeatedly and prominently that the reader tended to read something different from what the reporter had written. The casual reader's eye tends to glide past the source, and stick to the substance. He comes away with a headline and a general impression. The impression from these stories was likely to be that "the negotiations are on track," not that "U.S. officials believe the negotiations are on track."

All of these elements in the trap conspired to produce a noticeable divergence between news stories and news analyses. When *Times* and *Post* reporters turned to writing news analysis pieces, their optimism was decidedly muted and their agnosticism more on display. It was too bad that these pieces ran further back in their papers, and with far less frequency, than the straight "news" reports of Kissinger's public smiles and private hints.

The *Times* stories invariably followed the straight reporting path. Done by Gwertzman, Beecher and Max Frankel in Washington, Craig Whitney and Fox Butterfield in Vietnam and Flora Lewis in Paris, almost every sentence was laboriously punctuated by its source. Gwertzman's came closest, of any of the coverage, to picking up the problems in the October 26 Kissinger briefing. He wrote: "Some of these [differences], although minor on the surface, could lead to some delay in reaching a final agreement, despite Mr. Kissinger's definite

effort to present a hopeful picture." But even this only alluded to "delay," not basic problems. When Nixon said on November 2 that "There are still some provisions of the agreement which must be clarified so that all ambiguities will be removed," Gwertzman's story did not mention this critical sentence. In the November 9 *Times*, Gwertzman wrote that Kissinger's deputy, General Alexander Haig, was off to see Thieu, and it is "widely assumed that this is the final round." Neither Frankel, Gwertzman nor Beecher was hearing pessimistic noises from their Washington sources, at least until the very end, so they reported none in their news stories. (Yet when Gwertzman left the front page and did occasional Q. & A. and other analytical pieces, his skepticism came superbly to the fore. Beecher, too, turned in several important stories, including especially the one on November 30 where he wrote that "two or three major differences remained to be resolved . . .") Lewis' stories were "pified by her December 12 piece, which reported optimistic speculation but "no reliable information to support it" and a December 14 dispatch that reported rumors of progress but noted that the control issue of who shall rule Vietnam remained unresolved. Whitney and Butterfield duly reported Thieu's intransigence from Saigon. In sum, the *Times*' news stories were thorough and well-documented; yet their overall thrust perforce was to convey the optimism of the Administration.

The *Post* stories came from Murray Marder and Marilyn Berger in Washington, Jonathan Randal in Paris and Thomas Lippmann in Vietnam. The initial stories from Marder and Berger did little except report official and background statements from the Administration. They let Kissinger's reference to "minor details" and Nixon's insistence on removing ambiguities slip through their articles. But as Marder got going in the month of November, his pieces were penetrating. On November 7, he did a piece entitled "Serious Difference, Not Details, Apparently Stalls Peace". In it, Marder made much of the difficulties that still had to be overcome. Sadly, this was news analysis and appeared on page 14. On November 15, he wrote: "A final peace agreement may be weeks away even if no large obstacles arise, informed sources said." Marder stories dealing with Thieu, however, were not so skeptical. His December 15 article was written as if he believed that the Administration was headed toward accord with Hanoi regardless of what Thieu did and said. Randal's files from Paris varied considerably, depending apparently on whether he talked to the Hanoi or PRG delegates or to the Americans. On December 4, for example, he reported the *Le Monde* story that a cease-fire would be signed by December 15, and on December 7 he characterized the talks as "stalemated." The Lippmann stories

NEW YORK'S FOURTH METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER IS A WEEKLY

with

Mary Nichols, whose search for political scandals frequently causes a few

Jack Newfield, who would like to reform the prisons by sticking a few corrupt judges in them

Nat Hentoff, digging up amazing stories about the press and the FBI, who probably dig up amazing stories about Hentoff

Joe Flaherty, the last remaining civilized reactionary

Howard Smith, following the offbeat into outrageous places writing, next year's scenes today

Jill Johnston writing on herself

Clark Whelton sticking pins in liberal voodoo dolls

Blair Sabol stripping fashions bare

Andrew Sarris on films; don't miss, don't avoid, don't bother

Jules Feiffer: does he know you better than your analyst?

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were straight reporting. In sum, the *Post* stories were a little riskier and less hard than those in the *Times*, making them more interesting, and putting the reporter in a position better to catch or be caught by the Administration.

Time and *Newsweek* went further than the *Post* and the *Times* in predicting an agreement even before Kissinger's press conference. *Time* went so far as to call the agreement "the Kissinger plan." It was, said *Time*, "... an extraordinarily clever arrangement." In its first issue after the October 26 press conference, *Time* celebrated peace. While problems lay ahead because of the complexity of the agreement, it said, "a ceasefire should be achieved soon." Readers were given twenty pages of retrospective essays on the war and how the negotiations were consummated.

When peace did not appear by the next issue, *Time* struck a cautious note. The details to be settled were "not inconsequential;" "the posturing on all sides would have to end soon or the compromise ... could slip away." In its following issues, *Time*'s stories on the negotiations dropped to as little as a page a week. In these stories, *Time*'s own conclusions about the health of the negotiations were a mixture of optimism and caution. The stories noted the facts of sticky negotiating points and Thieu's intransigence. But in almost every story, the problems were balanced, or even dismissed by statements of official optimism. For example, after the November session had ended, *Time* sandwiched a brief mention of snags reported by Hanoi and Saigon sources in Paris with a report of "assurances by U.S. officials that the peace cavalcade was still 'on track,'" and the statement that "administration officials maintained that their peace scenario would not have to be substantially rewritten." Reporting on the difficult round which began on December 4, *Time* noted the estimate of "one high U.S. source" that there was only a "5% chance" that the talks would break down—as, of course, they did.

Newsweek did rather better. It paid more attention to the fact that by mid-November President Nixon was hardening his terms. It noted Washington's "studied optimism". Of course, it also fell into errors of optimism, particularly during the December negotiating session. But *Newsweek* deserves high marks for a predictive article in the December 4 issue, reporting on the period between the November and December sessions. It included a hard report of the acrimony at the end of the November talks, described Administration efforts to shoot down pessimistic rumors and concluded with a warning which all should have heeded: "But there was no particular reason to think that when Kissinger returns to Paris, Le Duc Tho will be any more sympathetic to the current U.S. proposals than he was last week. Thus, the pressure was on Washington—and on Henry Kissinger—to come up with something new or face still further prolongation of a war the U.S. clearly wanted to end." Despite its better track record, *Newsweek* too put important emphasis on official U.S. optimism. For example, the magazine did a good job of reporting Thieu's delaying tactics, but almost every reference to the Thieu trouble was followed by a note that U.S. officials were confident Thieu would be "manageable" when the time came.

As this is written, a cease-fire has gone into effect in Vietnam. But, however welcome and overdue, it in no way negates the lessons learned from those seven weeks at the end of the year when euphoria turned to despair. And few appear harder on the press for its role in relaying Administration optimism about peace than the journalists themselves. As we went around Washington talking to them, they, too, were trying to figure out how to avoid the pitfalls in the future—how to do a better job, how to avoid the trap of reporting "news" that was largely what the Administration wanted it to be. Of course, there will always be situations where journalists do not know what is really going on. In such cases, a reporter can avoid being the tool of an Administration by doing both more and less. Do more analysis, especially on the front page (labeling it as such, of course). Do less reporting of what government officials are saying, both officially and unofficially. We asked one *Times* man how he would act if he had it to do all over again. He said: "Write less."

LA...

continued from page 9

On Dec. 14, Fleming was being questioned on the stand in the Cooper case. "I suppose there is going to be another story about the Cooper affair in your newspaper," the defense attorney asked. "There are going to be no further issues of this paper whatsoever," Fleming replied. "Is it now defunct?" the attorney inquired. "That is correct," Fleming said, breaking into tears.

Yet, throughout January, Fleming was hopeful that new investors might be found, the paper redesigned, the staff sifted out. When Palevsky returned to town, Yager asked if he was willing to sell his 50% share to Platypus Publications for a token sum. According to Yager, Palevsky replied that he was willing to take a subordinate position in the company, but "if the paper becomes a wild success, I would like to know that I can get my money back somewhere down the line." Fleming and Yager, who had been scouting potential investors, say Palevsky's decision made it impossible to attract new money to the publication. They decided to file for bankruptcy. Although Fleming professes to feel no bitterness towards Palevsky—who had, after all, spent the money he initially promised—he still feels "we never really had a chance. We weren't given a fair pitch of the ball."

There still remains room in Los Angeles for a good, middle-ground weekly. Given time *LA* might have become just that. A few more breaks, and *LA* might have survived Palevsky's limited financial commitment. A bit more time to mature, and *LA* might have survived Fleming's mercurial editorial personality. But it could not survive them both. In the end, *LA* became just another part of the story of Los Angeles it had hoped to chronicle. The myth reclaimed its initials.

(LETTERS)

Armor Study (cont'd)

For his article, "In the Public Interest" (MORE—December, 1972), dealing with David Armor's study on busing, Edwin Diamond did not interview any of the principals of the magazine. Moreover he is so intent on demeaning Mr. Armor and diminishing *The Public Interest* that he is quick with the word "shoddy." On the evidence, the shoddy performance is Mr. Diamond's. To take that evidence *seriatim*:

- 1) He writes: "There was no 'Harvard' study, only one young research assistant's essay; there was no 'evidence' that busing had 'failed,' just some highly selective data ... The principal actor in the 'busing fails' story is David Armor, 33, until recently a statistical researcher at Harvard ..."

- 1a) David Armor was associate professor of sociology at Harvard, not a young research assistant. He was responsible for the training in methodology of the graduate students in the sociology department and is the creator of Data Text, a widely used computer program in social research.

In his article, Mr. Diamond refers "to the studies of Christopher Jencks at Harvard." (And Mr. Jencks, it might be noted, is also an associate professor at Harvard.) With just as much relevance, one can call Mr. Armor's study "at Harvard."

The essay reported in detail, with the statistical evidence, Mr. Armor's own study in Boston. He also reported the results of comparable studies in five other cities. If that is not evidence, what is?

- 2) Apropos of Mr. Armor's study, Mr. Diamond writes, "In a slightly less mad time, such information could certainly be taken in stride by the citizenry."
- 2a) He is right. But what Mr. Diamond does not say is that when Mr. Armor finished his study, the METCO organization denied him the right to publish the data and sought to suppress the findings.
- 3) Mr. Diamond states that Armor submitted an article to the *Harvard Educational Review*, "the accepted and authoritative forum," which turned down the article. He then cites three long paragraphs from a judgment by Professor Thomas Pettigrew and goes on, "if the *Review* was convinced by reasons such as these that Armor's work was too shoddy to be accepted, there were others ... One was *The Public Interest*, a quarterly edited by Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol.
- 3a) The *Harvard Educational Review* is a journal run and edited by graduate students; there is no faculty participation. Armor's article was read and turned down by a graduate student. Mr. Pettigrew had nothing

to do with it and was out of the country at that time. The paragraphs that Mr. Diamond cites in such slippery fashion were written *after* the appearance of Mr. Armor's article in *The Public Interest* and are part of a rebuttal to appear in the Winter issue of the magazine. As for *The Public Interest*, it is edited by two professors. I have been professor of sociology at Harvard for four years and previously was professor of sociology at Columbia University for ten years. My colleague, Mr. Kristol, is Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University.

- 4) "At Moynihan's suggestion, Armor sent drafts of his work to *The Public Interest*. Co-editor Kristol is another favorite White House court intellectual . . ."
- 4a) The reference to Kristol is a red (or is it black) herring; it still smells. Armor and I have offices in the same building at Harvard, William James Hall. We met as colleagues and were members of the Committee on Higher Degrees in the Sociology Department which met weekly or sometimes bi-weekly. I read the article before Kristol and told him we should accept it. We sent the article to be vetted by a nationally reputable social scientist and asked him to check it for methodological errors. The basic responsibility for accepting the article was mine. Mr. Diamond calls *The Public Interest* a highly politicized journal. We are a journal for the serious discussion of public policy. I am a Democrat and I have been a member of the National democratic Policy Committee. I voted for McGovern. The innuendo that the publication of the article was some "White House" plot is contemptible. We accepted the article as a serious contribution to a public policy debate.
- 5) "An editor at *The Public Interest* affirms that the quarterly decided to publish Armor's study 'because it was being boycotted and because it has a ring of authenticity from common sense and observation.' The editor adds, somewhat airily, 'I do think Armor can be faulted to some extent in reference to strict methodological canons . . .'"
- 5a) Mr. Diamond spoke by phone for fifteen minutes to a young associate editor of the magazine. He seems, at the same time, to have joined his remarks to some remarks of mine to reporters of the *Times*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Post*; but he left out the other half of my statement. From a strict methodological reckoning, I do not know of *any* study in the social sciences that could not be faulted, for inevitably no experimental design can be completely controlled. Mr. Diamond, in seeking to demean Mr. Armor, says airily that his results follow on James Coleman's study. That is so. But Mr. Coleman's findings were strongly attacked at their appearance, by many of the same persons who have attacked Mr. Armor (e.g., Thomas Pettigrew), and Mr. Coleman's findings have stood up. Armor's study was technically more proficient than Mr. Coleman's (though much more limited) for it was both a panel study and it used controls.

To move on to a different issue. Given the temper of the country, it is clear why many newspapers and writers would leap avidly on the findings of Mr. Armor. But in explaining this, one need not, as Mr. Diamond does, denigrate the findings themselves. Nor does Mr. Diamond deal at all with a contrary situation: the fact that in the academic community it is almost impossible to run a serious and sober discussion of the integration or I.Q. issue without being charged with racism and have student vigilantes take action against professors. The situation has become so bad that in the July 1972 issue of *The American Psychologist* fifty of the most noted psychologists and sociologists in the U.S. signed a letter (not reported in the press) protesting the fact that it is almost impossible to publish articles or do research on heredity and I.Q. And within the academic community many of the reactions to Mr. Armor's essay had that same vigilante quality. One might assume that if a diagnostician comes along and tells you that a program designed to improve the academic standing of children is ineffective, the logical response is: how do we make it better? I have never accepted Armor's article as an argument against integration. The case for integration stands or falls on moral grounds. What social science can tell us is whether the methods used for implementation are good or bad. Armor said the method was failing. My reaction is: if that is the case, let us try something else.

But Mr. Diamond can only read the problem in his own hysterical way. When he concludes that "a minor statistician on the basis of selective cases makes a faulty argument . . . in a highly politicized magazine," he is wrong in every fact. There is one simple way for readers of [MORE] to adjudicate this

argument. I will gladly send any reader who writes me the Summer 1972 issue of *The Public Interest* which contains the original Armor essay, and a copy of the Winter 1973 issue which contains the rebuttal by Thomas Pettigrew and Armor's reply.

—Daniel Bell
Co-editor, *The Public Interest*
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Edwin Diamond replies: Dan Bell has made the readers of [MORE] an offer they can't refuse: by all means write him for free copies of the Armor study and the Pettigrew analysis. Then, readers can judge for themselves the accuracy of my article and Bell's reply. Of course, Bell knows that neither the Armor study nor *The Public Interest* was the main subject of my article. I was reporting on how the media played the Armor material. Nothing in his letter challenges that account; indeed, the only time he takes up that issue—point two of his five points—he asserts that my account is correct. To take up his points—as briefly as possible, since they are tangents to the main thrust of my article:

Point one—Despite Bell's and the media's—effort to puff up Armor and his report, the fact remains that Armor had been dropped from the Harvard faculty before the article appeared; he was on terminal leave, an academic euphemism that permits people to use the premises and the letterhead while they look around for something else. To persist in insisting that Armor was an "associate professor at Harvard" after he had been let go is, to use Bell's own word, "slippery."

Point two—Bell says Diamond is right, then raises a red herring, or is it black, about METCO. Question to Bell: Did not METCO also think the Armor work was sloppy and reject it?

Point three—no challenge here that I can see, although it gives Bell a chance to roll out some thickly carpeted titles—Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University. I'm impressed! As impressed as I was when a White House man defended the Administration's media-monitoring operations by declaring to me that Nixon aide Patrick Buchanan was "a Graduate of the Columbia Journalism School . . ."

Point four—the question remains: did Moynihan act as middle

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man between Amor and Bell? As for his second subpoint, I am happy to learn that Bell voted for McGovern. His two editorial colleagues at *The Public Interest*, however, were busy Nixon workers: his associate editor, Paul Weaver, spent a good part of the campaign lining up academic personalities for Mr. Nixon for display in newspaper ads and at cocktail receptions; and his co-editor, Kristol, appeared in these Nixon ads and recently was named by the President to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, where the new Nixon majority has been swiftly dismantling public affairs programming. As for my comments on the highly politicized nature of *The Public Interest*, I'll send anyone who mails a self-addressed, stamped envelope—unlike Bell's magazine, I don't have a Ford Foundation subsidy (a story for another occasion)—with a rundown of recent PI articles, including its sympathetic treatment of Far Right hatchetperson Edith Ephron's attack on broadcast journalism.

Point five—Bell is not challenging the accuracy of his quote—nor should he, since I have it in his own handwriting.

Finally, Bell is disappointed that I didn't deal with all the "student vigilantes" at Harvard and elsewhere who have disrupted the classes of the Hernsteins the Shockleys and the Jensens. I suppose that the SDSers, or what is left of them, are a sorry lot. But on the whole I am less concerned about their pathetic and sporadic classroom "demos"—all but vanished, incidentally—than I am about the continued large scale access to media of the dyspeptic Mandarins of the fifties, who have become the new defenders of the status quo (are you ready, readers, for Bell's forthcoming epic, in defense of inequality)?

A Word for the 'Neediest'

Thank you for the December 1972 copy (unsolicited) of [MORE]. You called my attention to the article on Page 12. I read it. Your style is clever and cunning; your vocabulary diverse, your prose fluid; your historical review of the *Times* Neediest Cases Fund made interesting reading. When I finished my perusal I asked, "Now what?"

Even though you are aware of my relationship to this annual endeavor [the correspondent is an administrative assistant with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and oversees his organization's participation in the *Times* appeal], I prefer to address myself to you as a citizen "making it" in this metropolis. I presume that you and Ms. Hendrix could be similarly categorized. In this era of change (and let me remind you that change has always been occurring since recorded history) I find your review fraught with cynicism and sarcasm, convinced of the injustice of the social order and intent on continuously mounting the attack on the establishment. This was done before and I dare say will not stop. Yet I also say that your well-written word will go for naught if it centers on the "anti" without a corresponding, constructive alternate "pro."

It is folly to equate poverty with exploitation. When the "hard-hat" who commands a union wage is told by his doctor that his wife's cancer is terminal and after her death finds himself too rich to be poor and too poor to be rich, then he too is "a neediest." When the civil servant, secure in his tenured position, loses all when fire destroys his one-family house, then he too is "a neediest." When the aged lady tenaciously clings to her "nest egg" and thus defies the eligibility requirement for welfare, she too is "a neediest."

I could go on forever—yet I must ask "what are you doing about it?"

Perhaps you might think of the neediest when you attend the next cocktail party during the holiday season. Perhaps you may even qualify as a "Coodle" or "Foodle" who makes poverty possible if the *Times* heeds your suggestion to do a profile of such next year in lieu of the Neediest Cases Appeal.

It is said "the poor will always be with us." I don't agree with it. Let me exhort you to come up with your own plan for amelioration. If you do, please send me the copy of [MORE]. I may even pay for it.

—Fred Kamintzky
New York, N.Y.

Recycling the Times

After reading your article on *Moneysworth* (Sept., 1972) I started reading the publication more closely. Buried amid the subscription rates and ownership statements in 5-pt type was the following notice: "Articles on house fire, baby foods © 1972 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission."

Those two articles were the only ones in the Oct. 30, 1972, issue, except for the 1-paragraph items in the Dollars and Sense column. I find it most interesting to contemplate that Ralph Ginzburg has found nearly 600,000 persons willing to pay good money for reprints from *The New York Times*.

—Bruce Adomeit
St. Paul, Minn.

(HELLBOX)

continued from page 2

books, *Birds of America* and Medina, received unfavorable notices. "I was counseled not to be Christian about it and turn the other cheek," she says. When she made her decision to write for Silvers she had not yet read Halberstam's book, save for an excerpt in *Esquire*. She implies now that if she had realized how much she would dislike it, she might have aimed for the wider audience. And of course, one can speculate that she would have accepted Leonard's offer had Kempton not turned down Silvers' pleas for lack of time. (Kempton, incidentally, describes the book as "marvelous.")

Leonard says he was "amazed" by McCarthy's review but insists nevertheless that he would have run an abbreviated version of it on page one. "Sometimes you're at the mercy of assignments," he explains. Just how much a vitriolic TBR attack could have affected a book with considerable advance publicity is anybody's guess. Leonard himself is inclined to minimize the potential impact. "I doubt a review like hers would have hurt the sale of the book," he says. "It probably works the other way around. People say to themselves, 'My God, what could have gotten her that angry?'" Still, he is happy he was able to run Navasky's review instead.

Cronkite and AFTRA

The recent eight-week technicians strike by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers against CBS caused just about as much anti-union feeling among reporters as it did in the corporate boardroom. Many CBS on-air newsmen objected strongly to an order from their union, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), that they respect the technicians' picket lines. "We're journalists, not teamsters" was their attitude, and the most prominent reporters especially were relieved by a court ruling that allowed them to stay on the job.

Now, Walter Cronkite and a group of other reporters at the three networks are trying to divorce broadcast reporters from union brotherhood with actors, singers, dancers, jugglers and dog acts. The group is sending a questionnaire to reporters around the country asking their opinion on two alternatives: the formation of either autonomous locals for broadcast reporters only within AFTRA, or a new union outside AFTRA initially made up of broadcast reporters but eventually including all broadcast newsmen. Insisting that the group is not trying to proselytize through the questionnaire, Cronkite describes the mailing as a "genuine attempt to gauge sentiment."

While top reporters like Cronkite and former NBC anchorman Chet Huntley have long been known to resent their affiliation with AFTRA, other broadcasters—particularly less seasoned reporters—have welcomed its protection. Cronkite concedes that views differ on this matter, but he feels that most network newsmen would welcome a change. Among the other newscasters discussing union alternatives are Dan Rather, Richard C. Hottelet and Dallas Townsend of CBS; Edwin Newman and Pauline Frederick of NBC; and Frank Reynolds, Bill Beutel and Roger Sharp of ABC.

Although Cronkite declines to be labeled as either a leader or a spokesman for the secessionists, he himself favors a new union and thinks it is "within the realm of possibility" despite the fact that "it would be one hell of a job to put together." The cost of forming a new union would be high (members might have to pay double the current AFTRA dues) and the process for doing so would involve lengthy and complicated legal maneuverings. He says that a union made up of all broadcast news employees—reporters, writers, directors and producers—"would have strength. If a strike came, it would really close down the newsrooms."

AFTRA, of course, would be hard hit by any such defection. Unlike most AFTRA members, the newsmen earn good money on a steady basis. So AFTRA is expected to fight the idea of a new union. Sanford "Bud" Wolff, national executive secretary of AFTRA, said he thought "the great majority" of broadcast newsmen would vote to stay within AFTRA. But he added that he'd be happy to have talks with dissident members about their place in the union. "If that means a certain amount of autonomy, then we'll discuss that, too," he promised.

Stand-in for Chandler?

John F. Lawrence, Washington bureau chief of The Los Angeles Times, went to jail for two-and-a-half hours on December 19 when his paper refused to hand over to federal judge John Sirica unpublished portions of an interview by reporters Jack Nelson and Ronald Ostrow with Watergate witness Alfred C. Baldwin 3rd. Contempt charges were dropped the following day when Baldwin gave permission for the tapes to be released. Lawrence's jailing prompted a letter to the editor of the Times by John Gregory Dunne, the California-based writer. The Times did not publish the letter; instead, William F. Thomas, executive vice president and editor, responded to Dunne. Below are the two letters:

December 20, 1972

(CLASSIFIEDS)

Sir:

The jailing of John Lawrence is, as your editorial so rightly states, a mockery of the First Amendment. Yet I am troubled by the Times' action in naming Lawrence as its "agent" in this affair and hence liable to the penalties under the law. Despite his qualifications as a reporter and bureau chief, Lawrence is still only an employee of the Times. In a test case of this sort, where the Times itself is the ultimate repository of the confidential information gathered by Jack Nelson and Ronald Ostrow, it would seem that the issue would be more clearly drawn if the Times' agent were its publisher, Mr. Otis Chandler, or either of his parents who are active in the Times Mirror Company, namely Mr. Norman Chandler or Mrs. Dorothy Buffum Chandler. According to your reports, attorneys for the Justice Department made no objections to Judge Sirica about the subpoenas issued to Messrs. Lawrence, Nelson and Ostrow. They are after all only reporters. One doubts however that even this Administration would view with equanimity the prospect of sending Norman, Otis or Dorothy Chandler to jail.

Sincerely,
John Gregory Dunne

December 28, 1972

Dear Mr. Dunne:

In brief reply to your letter, I should explain that the rapidity with which Judge Sirica forced us to deal with events cast the actors in their roles without the chance for substitution.

So John Lawrence's physical presence in Washington as The Times representative, as indeed he is, by the way, was the chief determinant here. The stay we requested to allow time to prepare our case was not granted, as I'm sure you're aware. We had planned to use this time to discuss such things as who should appear, along with a thousand other things we were forced to telescope into a three-day period including the weekend.

I think, in any case, that the issue was very clearly drawn. What you're really talking about here is publicity value; the legal issue never did hinge on the cast of characters.

Nevertheless, your basic question is a good one, and one which I confess bothered me a great deal throughout the whole affair. Even if Lawrence was the logical choice after thorough discussion, and after all he heads a bureau of some 20 reporters and is a Times executive of consequence, I wish we had had the chance for that thorough discussion before he was committed.

Sincerely,
William F. Thomas

Although Otis Chandler permitted Lawrence to serve as his surrogate, another California publisher, William F. Knowland, has gone on record to say that he would "personally take the responsibility" of refusing to supply unpublished material sought from reporters at his paper, the Oakland Tribune. The statement by the man once known to Californians as "Mr. Republican" appeared in a UPI dispatch carried by Chandler's own paper January 12.

Corrections

In the discussion of Robin Morgan's poem "Arraignment," which appeared in the Hellbox last month, the last line of the first block of verses quoted should have read "real blood on real hands" instead of "real blood on his hands." Later in the piece one line was inadvertently dropped from Harper & Row editor Fran McCullough's remarks. The comment should have read: "I don't care what she [Robin Morgan] says about [Ted] Hughes—nor does he. Sylvia [Plath] says many damning things and says them better. But what disturbs me is the suggestion that the children be kidnapped and that Hughes be castrated and murdered." Doris Lessing and Richard Murphy are friends of Ted Hughes, which was also unclear because of the typographical errors.

WRITERS

EDITOR/WRITER, former trade journalist interested in new politics, alternate survival. Reply Box 5 [MORE]. (18)

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